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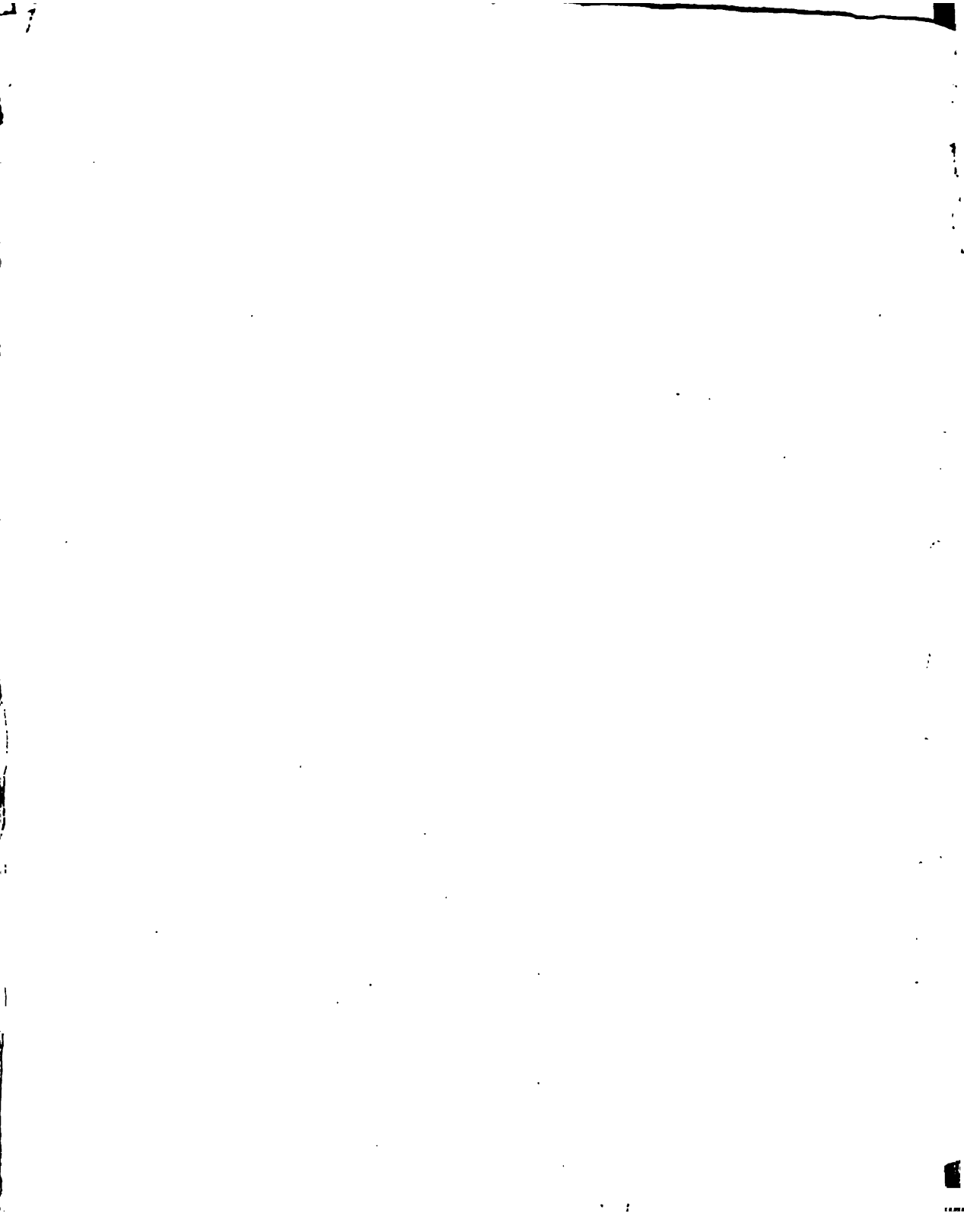


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**PRINTED FOR THE MALONE SOCIETY BY  
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PRESS**





**THE HISTORY OF  
KING LEIR  
"1605**



**THE MALONE SOCIETY  
REPRINTS  
1907**

This reprint of *King Leir* has been prepared by  
the General Editor and checked by R. Warwick  
Bond.

*Feb.* 1908.

W. W. Greg.

# THE True Chronicle Hi.

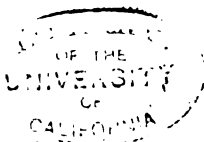
story of King LEIR, and his three  
daughters, *Gonorill, Ragan,*  
*and Cordella.*

As it hath bene diuers and sundry  
times lately acted.

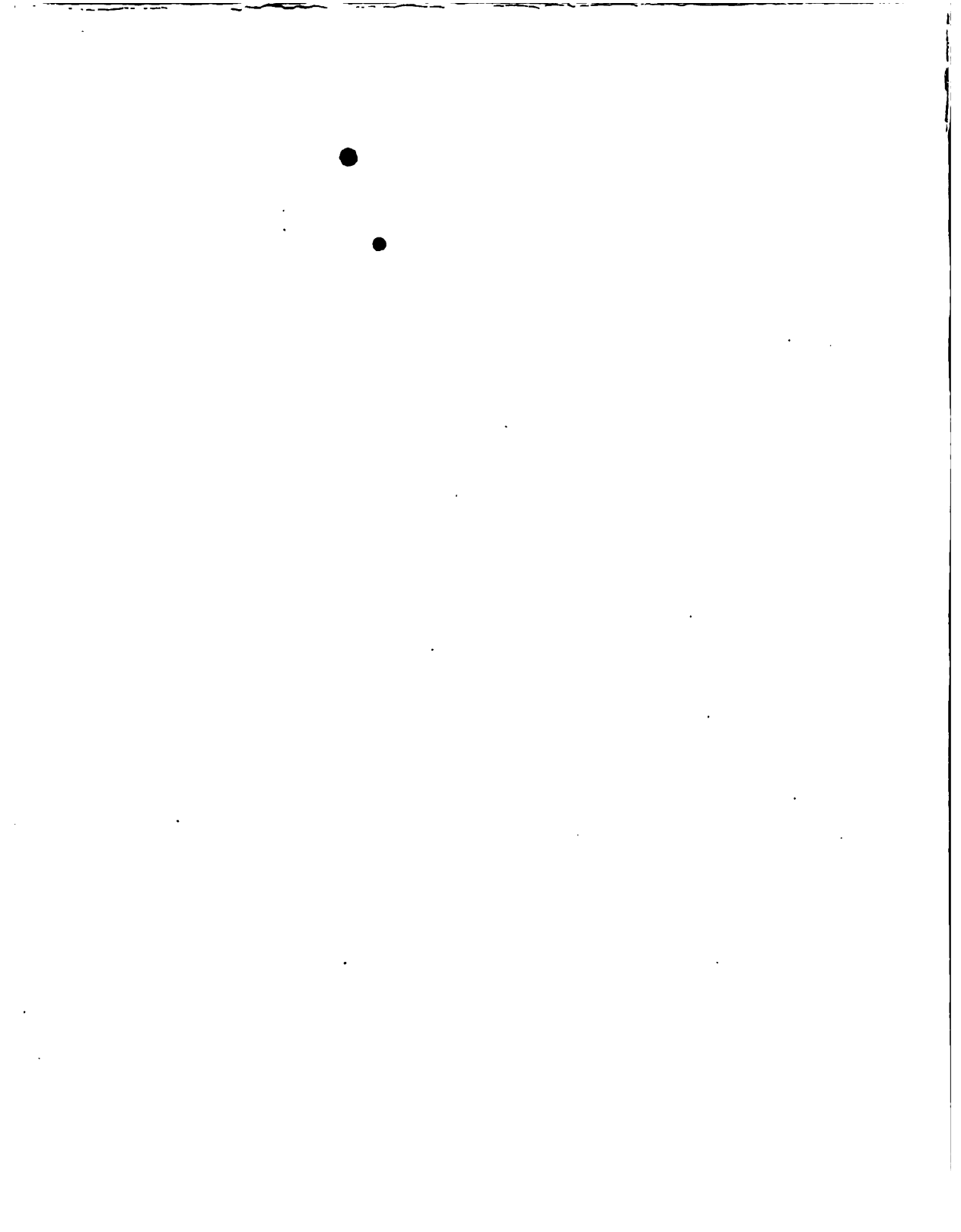


LONDON,

Printed by Simon Stafford for Iohn  
Wright, and are to bee sold at his shop at  
Christes Church dore, next Newgate-  
Market. 1605.



TITLE-PAGE (A 1) OF THE QUARTO OF 1605 (C. 34. l. 11)



The true Chronicle Historie of King  
Leir and his three daughters.

ACT VS I.

Enter King Leir, and Nobles.



Hus to our griefe the obsequies performed  
Of our (too late) deceast and dearest Queen,  
Whose soule I hope, posselt of heauely ioyes,  
Doth ride in triumph 'mongst the Cherubins;  
Let vs request your graue aduice, my Lords,  
For the disposing of our princely daughters,  
For whom our care is specially imployd,  
As nature bindeth to aduance their states,  
In royall marriage with some princely mates:  
For wanting now their mothers good aduice,  
Vnder whose gouernment they haue receyued  
A perfect patterne of a vertuous life:  
Left as it were a ship without a sterne,  
Or silly sheepe without a Pastors care;  
Although our selues doe dearely tender them,  
Yet are we ignorant of their assayres:  
For fathers best do know to gouerne sonnes;  
But daughters steps the mothers counsell turnes.  
A sonne we want for to succeed our Crowne,  
And course of time hath cancelled the date  
Of further issue from our withered loynes:  
One foote already hangeth in the graue,  
And age hath made deepe furrowes in my face:  
The world of me, I of the world am weary,  
And I would fayne resigne these earthly cares,  
And thanke vpon the welfare of my soule:  
Which by no better meanes may be effected,  
Then by resigning vp the Crowne from me,  
In equall dowry to my daughters three.

*Skalliger.* A worthy care, my Liege, which well declares,  
The zeale you bare vnto our *quondam* Queene:  
And since your Grace hath licens'd me to speake,

A 2

I cept



The following entries relating to *King Leir* are found in the Registers of the Stationers' Company for the years 1594 and 1605 respectively :

xiii<sup>th</sup> die Maij [1594]./. . . .

Entred alsoe for his Copie vnder thandes of bothe the wardens ~~Adam Islip~~ /.  
a booke entituled / The moste famous Chronicle historye of <sup>Edward White</sup> /.  
Leire kinge of England and his Three Daughters . . vj<sup>d</sup> C. /.

[Arber's Transcript, II. 649.]

8 maij [1605] . . .

Entred for his Copie vnder thandes of the Wardens A booke Simon Stafford  
called the Tragecall historie of kinge Leir and his Three  
Daughters &c. As it was latelie Acted . . . . . vj<sup>d</sup>  
Entred for his Copie by assignement from Simon Stafford and <sup>Iohn Wright</sup> /  
by consent of Master Leake, The Tragicall history of kinge  
Leire and his Three Daughters / Provided that Simon Stafford  
shall haue the printinge of this booke//. . . . . vj<sup>d</sup>

[Arber's Transcript, III. 289.]

The earlier entry follows immediately upon that, under the same date and to the same stationer, of Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. The allusion in the second entry to the play having been 'latelie Acted' was probably intended to lead the public to suppose that it was none other than Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the recent popularity of which upon the stage no doubt suggested the publication or republication of the earlier work.

The only record of the performance of *King Leir* that survives is in Henslowe's Diary, where it is recorded as being twice acted at the Rose, when that theatre was occupied by Queen Elizabeth's and the Earl of Sussex' men. The play, which is not marked as new, probably belonged to the former company, since we find no trace of it when,



at an earlier date, Sussex' men were acting alone. In this connection it may be observed that, according to the title-page of the 1594 quarto, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* was also 'plaid by her Maiesties seruants'. Henslowe's entries are as follow (fol. 9. ll. 8 & 10):

R at kinge leare the 6 of aprell 1593[4] . . . . xxxviij<sup>a</sup>  
 R at kinge leare the 8 [?] of aprell 1594. . . . xxvj<sup>a</sup>

The only edition of the play at present known bears the date 1605, and was printed, in accordance with the provision of the Register, by Simon Stafford for John Wright. It is a quarto, and the type used is a roman fount of the usual character and a body closely approximating to modern Pica (20 ll. = 84 mm.). Two copies are preserved in the British Museum, bearing respectively the press-marks C. 34. l. 11 and 161. a. 51. The former of these is defective, wanting the two inner leaves of sheet C, while the latter though perfect is slightly crompt. No variations of reading have been observed between these copies, both of which have been used in the preparation of this reprint.

The authorship of *King Lear* is doubtful, no external evidence on the point being available.

# LIST OF IRREGULAR AND DOUBTFUL READINGS.

45	fet	1490	their
149	do	1492	hands
186	c. w. <i>Gon</i> , I (?)	1524	& (I)
212	exceed	1562	<i>Damion</i>
290	Their	1581	fee
441	of (or)	1776	Se
454	Zlood	1807	there,
481	Intruth	1894	lesse (losse)
504	<i>others</i> , (?)	1962	do ubtful
687	Hath light	1970	wrong,
722	face:	2012	<i>changeth</i>
729	exc (?)	2013	<i>Mar</i> , (?)
827	kuow	2032	Theile
902	vn done	2148	insueth
925	<i>solus</i>	2149	trueth
1020	forfey. (?)	2186	folke
1028	Palerno	2187	<i>bungerly</i>
1061	<i>solus</i>	2397	fighteth
1108	cuts		fides
1131	difafter	2411	eye
1175	She	2458	much to
1297	seekes	2554	sute (sure)
1325	one: (?)	2610	toung
1376	falutes		

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

in order of entrance.

LEIR, King of Britain.		The King of CORNWALL.
SKALLIGER	} courtiers	his Man.
a Noble		The King of CAMBRIA.
PERILLUS	} of Lear.	his Man.
GONORILL		a Messenger from Cornwall.
RAGAN	} daughters	an Ambassador of Gallia.
CORDELLA		two Mariners.
The King of GALLIA.		two Watchmen.
MUMFORD	} courtiers	two Captains.
Nobles		a Noble, Chief of a Town.

Nobles, Attendants, Soldiers, Townsfolk.

# THE True Chronicle Hi-

story of King LEIR, and his three  
*daughters, Gonorill, Ragan,*  
*and Cordella.*

As it hath bene diuers and fundry  
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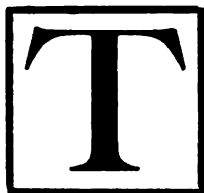


# The true Chronicle Historie of King *Leir and his three daughters.*

## ACTVS I.

*Enter King Leir and Nobles.*

Sc. i



Hus to our grieffe the obsequies performd  
Of our (too late) deceast and dearest Queen,  
Whose soule I hope, possesse of heauēly ioyes,  
Doth ride in triumph 'mōgst the Cherubins;  
Let vs request your graue aduice, my Lords,  
For the disposing of our princely daughters,

For whom our care is specially imployd,  
As nature bindeth to aduaunce their states,

10

✕ In royall marriage with some princely mates:

For wanting now their mothers good aduice,  
Vnder whose gouernment they haue receyued  
A perfit patterne of a vertuous life:

Left as it were a ship without a sterne,  
Or silly sheepe without a Pastors care;  
Although our selues doe dearely tender them,  
Yet are we ignorant of their affayres:

For fathers best do know to gouerne sonnes;  
But daughters steps the mothers counsell turnes.

20

A sonne we want for to succeed our Crowne,  
And course of time hath cancelled the date  
Of further issue from our withered loynes:  
One foote already hangeth in the graue,  
And age hath made deepe furrowes in my face:

✕ The world of me, I of the world am weary,  
And I would fayne resigne these earthly cares,  
And thinke vpon the welfare of my soule:  
Which by no better meanes may be effected,  
Then by resigning vp the Crowne from me,  
In equall dowry to my daughters three.

30

*Skalliger.* A worthy care, my Liege, which well declares,  
The zeale you bare vnto our *quondam* Queene:  
And since your Grace hath licens'd me to speake,

A 2

I cen-

## *The History of King Leir*

I censure thus; Your Maiesty knowing well,  
What feuerall Suters your princely daughters haue,  
To make them eche a loynter more or lesse,  
As is their worth, to them that loue professe.

*Leir.* No more, nor lesse, but euen all alike,  
40 My zeale is fixt, all fashiond in one mould :  
Wherefore vnpartiall shall my censure be,  
Both old and young shall haue alike for me.

*Nobl.* My gracious Lord, I hartily do wish,  
That God had lent you an heyre indubitate,  
Which might haue set vpon your royall throne,  
When fates should loose the prision of your life,  
By whose succession all this doubt might cease;  
And as by you, by him we might haue peace.  
But after-wishes euer come too late,

50 And nothing can reuoke the course of fate :  
Wherefore, my Liege, my censure deemes it best,  
x To match them with some of your neighbour Kings,  
x Bordring within the bounds of Albion,  
By whose vnited friendship, this our state  
May be protected 'gainst all forrayne hate.

*Leir.* Herein, my Lords, your wishes fort with mine,  
And mine (I hope) do fort with heauenly powers :  
For at this instant two neere neyghbouring Kings  
Of Cornwall and of Cambria, motion loue

60 To my two daughters, *Gonorill* and *Ragan*.  
x My youngest daughter, fayre *Cordella*, vowes  
x No liking to a Monarch, vnlesse loue allowes.  
She is sollicitd by diuers Peeres;  
But none of them her partiall fancy heares.  
Yet, if my policy may her beguyle,  
x Ile match her to some King within this Ile,  
And so establisth such a perfit peace,  
As fortunes force shall ne're preuayle to cease.

*Perillus.* Of vs & ours, your gracious care, my Lord,  
70 Deserues an euerlasting memory,  
To be inol'd in Chronicles of fame,  
By neuer-dying perpetuity :

Yet

*and his three daughters.*

Yet to become so prouident a Prince,  
Lose not the title of a louing father :  
Do not force loue, where fancy cannot dwell,  
Lest streames being stopt, aboue the banks do swell.

x *Leir.* I am resolu'd, and euen now my mind

x Doth meditate a suddenn stratagem,

x To try which of my daughters loues me best :

Which till I know, I cannot be in rest. 80

This graunted, when they ioyn'tly shall contend,

Eche to exceed the other in their loue :

Then at the vantage will I take *Cordella*,

Euen as she doth protest she loues me best,

Ile say, Then, daughter, graunt me one request,

To shew thou louest me as thy sisters doe,

x Accept a husband, whom my selfe will woo.

This sayd, she cannot well deny my sute,

Although (poore soule) her sences will be mute :

x Then will I tryumph in my policy,

90

x And match her with a King of Brittainy.

*Skal.* Ile to them before, and bewray your secrecy.

*Per.* Thus fathers think their children to beguile,

And oftentimes themselues do first repent,

When heavenly powers do frustrate their intent. *Exeunt.*

*Enter Gonorill and Ragan.*

*Sc. ii*

*Gon.* I maruell, *Ragan*, how you can indure

To see that proud pert Peat, our youngest sister,

So slightly to account of vs, her elders,

As if we were no better then her selfe !

100

We cannot haue a quaynt deuice so soone,

Or new made fashon, of our choyce inuention ;

But if she like it, she will haue the same,

Or study newer to exceed vs both.

Besides, she is so nice and so demure ;

So sober, courteous, modest, and precise,

That all the Court hath worke ynough to do,

To talke how she exceedeth me and you.

*Ra.* What should I do ? would it were in my power,

To find a cure for this contagious ill ;

110



## *The History of King Leir*

Some desperate medicine must be soone applyed,  
To dimme the glory of her mounting fame;  
Els ere't be long, sheele haue both prick and praise,  
And we must be set by for working dayes.  
Doe you not see what seuerall choyce of Suters  
She daily hath, and of the best degree?  
Say, amongst all, the hap to fancy one,  
And haue a husband when as we haue none:  
Why then, by right, to her we must giue place,  
120 Though it be ne're so much to our disgrace.

*Gon.* By my virginity, rather then she shall haue  
A husband before me,

Ile marry one or other in his shirt:  
And yet I haue made halfe a graunt already  
Of my good will vnto the King of Cornwall.

*Ra.* Swear not so deeply (sister) here cometh my *L. Skalliger*.  
Something his hasty comming doth import. *Enter Skall.*

*Skal.* Sweet Princeesses, I am glad I met you heere so luckily,  
Hauing good newes which doth concerne you both,  
130 And craueth speedy expedition.

*Ra.* For Gods sake tell vs what it is, my Lord,  
I am with child vntill you vtter it.

*Skal.* Madam, to saue your longing, this it is:  
Your father in great secrecy to day,  
Told me, he meanes to marry you out of hand,  
Vnto the noble Prince of Cambria;  
You, Madam, to the King of Cornwalls Grace:  
Your yonger sister he would fayne bestow  
Vpon the rich King of Hibernia:

140 But that he doubts, she hardly will consent;  
For hitherto she ne're could fancy him.  
If she do yeeld, why then, betweene you three,  
He will deuide his kingdome for your dowries.  
But yet there is a further mystery,  
Which, so you will conceale, I will disclose.

*Gon.* What e're thou speakst to vs, kind *Skalliger*,  
Thinke that thou speakst it only to thy selfe.

*Skal.* He earnestly desireth for to know,  
Which

*and his three daughters.*

Which of you three do beare most loue to him;  
And on your loues he so extremely dotes,  
As neuer any did, I thinke, before.

150

He presently doth meane to send for you,  
To be resolu'd of this tormenting doubt:  
And looke, whose answer please him the best,  
They shall haue most vnto their marriages.

*Ra.* O that I had some pleasing Mermayds voyce,  
For to inchaunt his sencelesse fences with!

*Skal.* For he supposeth that *Cordella* will  
(Striuing to go beyond you in her loue)  
Promise to do what euer he desires:

160

Then will he straight enioyne her for his sake,  
The Hibernian King in marriage for to take.  
This is the summe of all I haue to say;  
Which being done, I humbly take my leaue,  
Not doubting but your wisdomes will foresee,  
What course will best vnto your good agree.

*Gon.* Thanks, gentle *Skalliger*, thy kindnes vnderferued,  
Shall not be vnrequited, if we liue. *Exit Skalliger.*

*Ra.* Now haue we fit occasion offred vs,  
To be reueng'd vpon her vnpercey'd.

170

*Gon.* Nay, our reuenge we will inflict on her,  
Shall be accounted piety in vs:

I will so flatter with my doting father,  
As he was ne're so flattred in his life.  
Nay, I will say, that if it be his pleasure,  
To match me to a begger, I will yeeld:

For why, I know what euer I do say,  
He meanes to match me with the Cornwall King.

*Ra.* Ile say the like: for I am well assured,  
What e're I say to please the old mans mind,  
Who dotes, as if he were a child agayne,  
I shall inioy the noble Cambrian Prince:

180

Only, to feed his humour, will suffice,  
To say, I am content with any one  
Whom heele appoynt me; this will please him more,  
Then e're *Apolloes* musike pleased *Ioue*.

## *The History of King Leir*

*Gon.* I smile to think, in what a wofull plight  
*Cordella* will be, when we answere thus:

For she will rather dye, then giue consent  
190 To loyne in marriage with the Irish King:  
So will our father think, she loueth him not,  
Because she will not graunt to his desire,  
Which we will aggrauate in such bitter termes,  
That he will soone conuert his loue to hate:

✕ For he, you know, is alwayes in extremes.

*Rag.* Not all the world could lay a better plot,  
I long till it be put in practice. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. iii*

*Enter Leir and Perillus.*

*Leir.* *Perillus*, go seeke my daughters,  
200 Will them immediately come and speake with me.

*Per.* I will, my gracious Lord. *Exit.*

*Leir.* Oh, what a combat feeles my panting heart,  
Twixt childrens loue, and care of Common weale!  
How deare my daughters are vnto my soule,  
None knowes, but he, that knowes my thoghts & secret deeds.  
Ah, little do they know the deare regard,  
Wherein I hold their future state to come:  
When they securely sleepe on beds of downe,  
These aged eyes do watch for their behalfe:  
210 While they like wantons sport in youthfull toyes,  
This throbbing heart is pearst with dire annoyes.  
As doth the Sun exceed the smallest Starre;  
So much the fathers loue exceeds the childs.  
Yet my complaynts are causlesse: for the world  
Affords not children more conformable:  
And yet, me thinks, my mind presageth still  
I know not what; and yet I feare some ill.

*Enter Perillus, with the three daughters.*

Well, here my daughters come: I haue found out  
220 A present meanes to rid me of this doubt.

*Gon.* Our royall Lord and father, in all duty,  
We come to know the tenour of your will,  
Why you so hastily haue sent for vs?

*Leir.* Deare *Gonorill*, kind *Ragan*, sweet *Cordella*,  
Ye

*and his three daughters.*

Ye flourishing branches of a Kingly stocke,  
Sprung from a tree that once did flourish greene,  
Whose blossomes now are nipt with Winters frost,  
And pale grym death doth wayt vpon my steps,  
And summons me vnto his next Assizes.

Therefore, deare daughters, as ye tender the safety  
Of him that was the cause of your first being,  
Resolue a doubt which much molests my mind,  
Which of you three to me would proue most kind;  
Which loues me most, and which at my request  
Will soonest yeeld vnto their fathers heft. 230

*Gon.* I hope, my gracious father makes no doubt  
Of any of his daughters loue to him:  
Yet for my part, to shew my zeale to you,  
Which cannot be in windy words rehearst,  
I prize my loue to you at such a rate, 240  
I thinke my life inferiour to my loue.  
Should you inioyne me for to tye a milstone  
About my neck, and leape into the Sea,  
At your commaund I willingly would doe it:  
Yea, for to doe you good, I would ascend  
The highest Turret in all Brittany,  
And from the top leape headlong to the ground:  
Nay, more, should you appoynt me for to marry  
The meanest vassayle in the spacious world,  
Without reply I would accomplish it: 250  
In brieft, commaund what euer you desire,  
And if I fayle, no fauour I require.

*Leir.* O, how thy words reuiue my dying soule!

*Cor.* O, how I doe abhorre this flattery!

*Leir.* But what sayth *Ragan* to her fathers will?

*Rag.* O, that my simple vtterance could suffice,  
To tell the true intencion of my heart,  
Which burnes in zeale of duty to your grace,  
And neuer can be quench'd, but by desire  
To shew the same in outward forwardnesse. 260  
Oh, that there were some other mayd that durst  
But make a challenge of her loue with me;

## *The History of King Leir*

Ide make her soone confesse she neuer loued  
Her father halfe so well as I doe you.  
I then, my deeds should proue in playner case,  
How much my zeale aboundeth to your grace:  
But for them all, let this one meane suffice,  
To ratify my loue before your eyes:

I haue right noble Suters to my loue,  
270 No worse then Kings, and happely I loue one:  
Yet, would you haue me make my choyce anew,

*P* Ide bridle fancy, and be rulde by you.

*Leir.* Did neuer *Philomel* sing so sweet a note.

*Cord.* Did neuer flatterer tell so false a tale.

*Leir.* Speak now, *Cordella*, make my ioyes at full,  
And drop downe Nectar from thy hony lips.

*Cbr.* I cannot paynt my duty forth in words,  
I hope my deeds shall make report for me:  
But looke what loue the child doth owe the father,

280 The same to you I beare, my gracious Lord.

*Gon.* Here is an answere answerlesse indeed:  
Were you my daughter, I should scarcely brooke it.

*Rag.* Dost thou not blush, proud Peacock as thou art,  
To make our father such a slight reply?

*Leir.* Why how now, Minion, are you growne so proud?  
Doth our deare loue make you thus peremptory?

What, is your loue become so small to vs,  
As that you scorne to tell vs what it is?  
Do you loue vs, as euery child doth loue

290 Their father? True indeed, as some,  
Who by disobedience short their fathers dayes,  
And so would you; some are so father-sick,  
That they make meanes to rid them from the world;  
And so would you: some are indifferent,  
Whether their aged parents liue or dye;  
And so are you. But, didst thou know, proud gyrl,  
What care I had to foster thee to this,  
Ah, then thou wouldst say as thy sisters do:  
Our life is lesse, then loue we owe to you.

300 *Cord.* Deare father, do not so mistake my words,  
Nor

*and his three daughters.*

Nor my playne meaning be misconstrued;  
My tounge was neuer vnde to flattery.

*Gon.* You were not best say I flatter: if you do,  
My deeds shall shew, I flatter not with you.  
I loue my father better then thou canst.

*Cor.* The prayse were great, spoke from anothers mouth:  
But it should seeme your neighbours dwell far off.

*Rag.* Nay, here is one, that will confirme as much  
As she hath sayd, both for my selfe and her.  
I say, thou dost not with my fathers good.

310

*Cor.* Deare father.—

*Leir.* Peace, bastard Impe, no issue of King *Leir*,  
I will not heare thee speake one tittle more.  
Call not me father, if thou loue thy life,  
Nor these thy sisters once presume to name:  
Looke for no helpe henceforth from me nor mine;  
Shift as thou wilt, and trust vnto thy selfe:  
My Kingdome will I equally deuide  
Twixt thy two sisters to their royall dowre,  
And will bestow them worthy their deserts:  
This done, because thou shalt not haue the hope,  
To haue a childs part in the time to come,  
I presently will dispossesse my selfe,  
And set vp these vpon my princely throne.

320

*Gon.* I euer thought that pride would haue a fall.

*Ra.* Plaine dealing, sister: your beauty is so sheene,  
You need no dowry, to make you be a Queene.

*Exeunt Leir, Gonorill, Ragan.*

*Cor.* Now whither, poore forsaken, shall I goe,  
When mine own sisters tryumph in my woe?  
But vnto him which doth protect the iust,  
In him will poore *Cordella* put her trust.  
These hands shall labour, for to get my spending;  
And so ile liue vntill my dayes haue ending.

330

*Per.* Oh, how I grieve, to see my Lord thus fond,  
To dote so much vpon ~~vayne flattering~~ words. ✓  
Ah, if he but with good aduice had weyghed,  
The hidden tenure of her humble speech,

B 2

Reason



## *The History of King Leir*

Reason to rage should not haue giuen place,  
340 Nor poore *Cordella* suffer such disgrace. *Exit.*  
*S. iv* *Enter the Gallian King with Mumford, and three*  
*Nobles more.*

*King.* Diffwade me not, my Lords, I am resolu'd,  
This next fayre wynd to fayle for Brittainy,  
In some disguise, to see if flying fame  
Be not too prodigall in the wondrous prayse  
Of these three Nymphes, the daughters of King *Leir*.  
If present view do answere absent prayse,  
And eyes allow of what our eares haue heard,  
350 And *Venus* stand auspicious to my vowes,  
And Fortune fauour what I take in hand ;  
I will returne seyz'd of as rich a prize  
As *Iason*, when he wanne the golden fleece.

*Mum.* Heauens graūt you may ; the match were ful of honor,  
And well beseeming the young Gallian King.  
I would your Grace would fauour me so much,  
As make me partner of your Pilgrimage.  
I long to see the gallant Brittain Dames,  
And feed mine eyes vpon their rare perfections :  
360 For till I know the contrary, Ile say,  
Our Dames in Fraunce are more fayre then they.

*Kin.* Lord *Mumford*, you haue saued me a labour,  
In offering that which I did meane to aske :  
And I most willingly accept your company.  
Yet first I will inioyne you to obserue  
Some few conditions which I shall propose.

*Mum.* So that you do not tye mine eyes for looking  
After the amorous glaunces of fayre Dames :  
So that you do not tye my tounge from speaking,  
370 My lips from kissing when occasion serues,  
My hands from congees, and my knees to bow  
To gallant Gyrls ; which were a taske more hard,  
Then flesh and bloud is able to indure :  
Commaund what else you please, I rest content.

*Kin.* To bind thee from a thing thou canst not leaue,  
Were but a meane to make thee seeke it more :

And

*and his three daughters.*

And therefore speake, looke, kisse, salute for me ;  
In these my selfe am like to second thee.  
Now heare thy taske. I charge thee from the time  
That first we set sayle for the Brittish shore,  
To vse no words of dignity to me,  
But in the friendliest maner that thou canst,  
Make vse of me as thy companion :  
For we will go disguise in Palmers weeds,  
That no man shall mistrust vs what we are.

380

*Mum.* If that be all, ile fit your turne, I warrant you. I am  
some kin to the Blunts, and I think, the bluntest of all my kin-  
dred ; therfore if I bee too blunt with you, thank your selfe for  
praying me to be so.

*King.* Thy pleasantcompany will make the way seeme short. 390  
It resteth now, that in my absence hence,  
I do commit the gouernment to you  
My trusty Lords and faythfull Counsellers.  
Time cutteth off the rest I haue to say :  
The wynd blowes fayre, and I must needs away.

*Nobles.* Heauens send your voyage to as good effect,  
As we your land do purpose to protect.

*Exeunt.*

*Enter the King of Cornwall and his man booted and  
spurd, a riding wand, and a letter in his hand.*

Sc. v

*Corn.* But how far distant are we from the Court ?

400

*Ser.* Some twenty miles, my Lord, or thereabouts.

*Corn.* It seemeth to me twenty thousand myles :

Yet hope I to be there within this houre.

*Ser.* Then are you like to ride alone for me.

*to him-  
selfe.*

I thinke, my Lord is weary of his life.

*Corn.* Sweet *Gonorill*, I long to see thy face,

Which hast so kindly gratified my loue.

*Enter the King of Cambria booted and spurd, and his  
man with a wand and a letter.*

*Cam.* Get a fresh horse: for by my soule I sweare, *He looks* 410

I am past patience, longer to forbear

*on the  
letter.*

The wished sight of my beloued mistris,

Deare *Ragan*, stay and comfort of my life.

*Ser.* Now what in Gods name doth my Lord intend? *to him-*

B 3

*He selfe.*



## *The History of King Leir*

He thinks he ne're shall come at's iourneyes end.  
I would he had old *Dedalus* waxen wings,  
That he might flye, so I might stay behind :  
For e're we get to Troynouant, I see,  
He quite will tyre himselfe, his horse and me.

430 *Cornwall & Cambria looke one vpon another, and  
start to see eche other there.*

*Corn.* Brother of Cambria, we greet you well,  
As one whom here we little did expect.

*Cam.* Brother of Cornwall, met in happy time :  
I thought as much to haue met with the Souldan of Persia,  
As to haue met you in this place, my Lord.  
No doubt, it is about some great affayres,  
That makes you here so slenderly accompanied.

*Corn.* To say the truth, my Lord, it is no lesse,  
430 And for your part some hasty wind of chance  
Hath blowne you hither thus vpon the sudden.

*Cam.* My Lord, to break off further circumstances,  
For at this time I cannot brooke delays :  
Tell you your reason, I will tell you mine.

*Corn.* In fayth content, and therefore to be brieft ;  
For I am sure my haste's as great as yours :  
I am sent for, to come vnto King *Leir*,  
Who by these present letters promifeth  
His eldest daughter, louely *Gonorill*,  
440 To me in marriage, and for present dowry,  
The moiety of halfe his Regiment.  
The Ladies loue I long ago posselt :  
But vntill now I neuer had the fathers.

*Cam.* You tell me wonders, yet I will relate  
Strange newes, and henceforth we must brothers call ;  
Witnesse these lynes : his honourable age,  
Being weary of the troubles of his Crowne,  
His princely daughter *Ragan* will bestow  
On me in marriage, with halfe his Seigniories,  
450 Whom I would gladly haue accepted of,  
With the third part, her complements are such.

*Corn.* If I haue one halfe, and you haue the other,  
Then

*and his three daughters.*

Then betweene vs we must needs haue the whole.

*Cam.* The hole! how meane you that? Zlood, I hope,  
We shall haue two holes betweene vs.

*Corn.* Why, the whole Kingdome.

*Cam.* I, that's very true.

*Cor.* What then is left for his third daughters dowry,  
Louely *Cordella*, whom the world admires?

*Cam.* Tis very strange, I know not what to thinke, 460  
Vnlesse they meane to make a Nunne of her.

*Corn.* 'Twere pity such rare beauty should be hid  
Within the compasse of a Cloysters wall:  
But howsoe're, if *Leirs* words proue true,  
It will be good, my Lord, for me and you.

*Cam.* Then let vs haste, all danger to preuent,  
For feare delays doe alter his intent. *Exeunt.*

*Enter Gonorill and Ragan.*

*Sc. vi*

*Gon.* Sister, when did you see *Cordella* last,  
That prety piece, that thinks none good ynough  
To speake to her, because (sir-reuerence)  
She hath a little beauty extraordinary?

470

*Ra.* Since time my father warnd her from his presence,  
I neuer saw her, that I can remember.  
God giue her ioy of her surpassing beauty;  
I thinke, her dowry will be small ynough.

*Gon.* I haue incenst my father so against her,  
As he will neuer be reclaymd agayne.

*Rag.* I was not much behind to do the like.

*Gon.* Faith, sister, what moues you to beare her such good 480

*Rag.* Intruth, I thinke, the same that moueth you; (will?)  
Because she doth surpasse vs both in beauty.

*Gon.* Beshrew your fingers, how right you can gesse:  
I tell you true, it cuts me to the heart.

*Rag.* But we will keepe her low enough, I warrant,  
And clip her wings for mounting vp too hye.

*Gon.* Who euer hath her, shall haue a rich mariage of her.

*Rag.* She were right fit to make a Parsons wife:  
For they, men say, do loue faire women well,

## *The History of King Leir*

490 And many times doe marry them with nothing.

*Gon.* With nothing! marry God forbid: why, are there any  
*Rag.* I meane, no money. (such?)

*Gon.* I cry you mercy, I mistooke you much:  
And she is far too stately for the Church;  
Sheele lay her husbands Benefice on her back,  
Euen in one gowne, if she may haue her will.

*Ra.* In faith, poore soule, I pittie her a little.  
Would she were lesse fayre, or more fortunate.  
Well, I thinke long vntill I see my *Morgan*,

500 The gallant Prince of Cambria, here arriue.

*Gon.* And so do I, vntill the Cornwall King  
Present himselfe, to consummate my ioyes.  
Peace, here commeth my father.

*Enter Leir, Perillus and others.*

*Leir.* Cease, good my Lords, and sue not to reuerse  
Our censure, which is now irreuocable.

We haue dispatched letters of contract  
Vnto the Kings of Cambria and of Cornwall;  
Our hand and seale will iustify no lesse:

510 Then do not so dishonour me, my Lords,  
As to make shipwrack of our kingly word.  
I am as kind as is the Pellican,

That kils it selfe, to saue her young ones liues:  
And yet as ielous as the princely Eagle,  
That kils her young ones, if they do but dazell  
Vpon the radiant splendor of the Sunne.

Within this two dayes I expect their comming.  
But in good time, they are arriu'd already.

This haste of yours, my Lords, doth testify

520 The feruent loue you beare vnto my daughters:  
And think your selues as welcome to King *Leir*,  
As euer *Pryams* children were to him.

*Corn.* My gracious Lord, and father too, I hope,  
Pardon, for that I made no greater haste:  
But were my horse as swift as was my will,  
I long ere this had seene your Maiesty.

*Cam.* No other scuse of absence can I frame,

Then

*Enter  
Kings of  
Cornwall  
and Cam-  
bria.*

*and his three daughters.*

Then what my brother hath inform'd your Grace :  
For our vnderferued welcome, we do vowe,  
Perpetuall<sup>y</sup> to rest at your commaund.

530

*Corn.* But you, sweet Loue, illustrious *Gonorill*,  
The Regent, and the Soueraigne of my soule,  
Is *Cornwall* welcome to your Excellency ?

*Gon.* As welcome, as *Leander* was to *Hero*,  
Or braue *Aeneas* to the Carthage Queene :  
So and more welcome is your Grace to me.

*Cam.* O, may my fortune proue no worfe then his,  
Since heauens do know, my fancy is as much.  
Deare *Ragan*, say, if welcome vnto thee,  
All welcomes else will little comfort me.

540

*Rag.* As gold is welcome to the couetous eye,  
As sleepe is welcome to the Traueller,  
As is fresh water to sea-beaten men,  
Or moystned showres vnto the parched ground,  
Or any thing more welcomer then this,  
So and more welcome louely *Morgan* is.

*Leir.* What resteth then, but that we consummate,  
The celebration of these nuptiall Rites ?  
My Kingdome I do equally deuide.  
Princes, draw lots, and take your chaunce as fallies.

550

*Then they draw lots.*

These I resigne as freely vnto you,  
As earst by true succession they were mine.  
And here I do freely dispossesse my selfe,  
And make you two my true adopted heyres :  
My selfe will soiorne with my sonne of Cornwall,  
And take me to my prayers and my beades.  
I know, my daughter *Ragan* will be sorry,  
Because I do not spend my dayes with her :  
Would I were able to be with both at once ;  
They are the kindest Gyrles in Christendome.

560

*Per.* I haue bin silent all this while, my Lord,  
To see if any worthyer then my selfe,  
Would once haue spoke in poore *Cordellues* cause :  
But loue or feare tyes silence to their tounge.

C

Oh,

## *The History of King Leir*

Oh, heare me speake for her, my gracious Lord,  
Whose deeds haue not deseru'd this ruthlesse doome,  
As thus to disinherit her of all.

*Leir.* Vrge this no more, and if thou loue thy life :  
570 I say, she is no daughter, that doth scorne  
To tell her father how she loueth him.  
Who euer speaketh hereof to mee agayne,  
I will esteeme him for my mortall foe.  
Come, let vs in, to celebrate with ioy,  
The happy Nuptialls of these louely payres.

*Exeunt omnes, manet Perillus.*

[ *Per.* Ah, who so blind, as they that will not see  
The neere approach of their owne misery ?  
Poore Lady, I extremely pittie her :  
580 And whilest I liue, eche drop of my heart blood,  
Will I strayne forth, to do her any good. *Exit.*

*Sc. vii* *Enter the Gallian King, and Mumford, disguised  
like Pilgrims.*

*Mum.* My Lord, how do you brook this Brittish ayre ?

*King.* My Lord ? I told you of this foolish humour,  
And bound you to the contrary, you know.

*Mum.* Pardon me for once, my Lord ; I did forget.

*King.* My Lord agayne ? then let's haue nothing else,  
And so be tane for spyes, and then tis well.

590 *Mum.* Swounds, I could bite my tounge in two for anger :  
For Gods sake name your selfe some proper name.

*King.* Call me *Tresillus* : Ile call thee *Denapoll*.

*Mum.* Might I be made the Monarch of the world,  
I could not hit vpon these names, I sweare.

*King.* Then call me *Will*, ile call thee *Iacke*.

*Mum.* Well, be it so, for I haue wel deseru'd to be cal'd *Iack*.

*King.* Stand close; for here a Brittish Lady cometh : *Enter  
A fayrer creature ne're mine eyes beheld. Cordella.*

*Cord.* This is a day of ioy vnto my sisters,  
600 Wherein they both are married vnto Kings;  
And I, by byrth, as worthy as themselues,  
Am turnd into the world, to seeke my fortune.  
How may I blame the fickle Queene of Chaunce,

That

*and his three daughters.*

That maketh me a patterne of her power?

Ah, poore weake mayd, whose imbecility

Is far vnable to indure these brunts.

Oh, father *Leir*, how dost thou wrong thy child,

Who alwayes was obedient to thy will!

But why accuse I fortune and my father?

No, no, it is the pleasure of my God:

And I do willingly imbrace the rod.

610

*King.* It is no Goddesse; for she doth complayne

On fortune, and th'vnkindnesse of her father.

*Cord.* These costly robes ill fitting my estate,

I will exchange for other meaner habit.

*Mum.* Now if I had a Kingdome in my hands,

I would exchange it for a milkmaids smock and petycoate,

That she and I might shift our clothes together.

*Cord.* I will betake me to my threed and Needle,

And earne my living with my fingers ends.

620

*Mum.* O braue! God willing, thou shalt haue my custome,

By sweet S. *Denis*, here I sadly sweare,

For all the shirts and night-gear that I weare.

*Cord.* I will professe and vow a maydens life.

*Mum.* Thē I protest thou shalt not haue my custome.

*King.* I can forbear no longer for to speak:

For if I do, I think my heart will breake.

*Mum.* Sblood, *Wil*, I hope you are not in loue with my Sēpster.

*King.* I am in such a laborinth of loue,

As that I know not which way to get out.

630

*Mum.* You'l ne're get out, vnlesse you first get in.

*King.* I prithy *Iacke*, crosse not my passions.

*Mum.* Prithy *Wil*, to her, and try her patience.

*King.* Thou fairest creature, whatsoere thou art,

That euer any mortall eyes beheld,

Vouchsafe to me, who haue o'reheard thy woes,

To shew the cause of these thy sad laments.

*Cor.* Ah Pilgrims, what auails to shew the cause,

When there's no meanes to find a remedy?

*King.* To vtter grieve, doth ease a heart o'recharg'd.

640

*Cor.* To touch a sore, doth aggrauate the payne.

## *The History of King Leir*

*King.* The filly mouse, by vertue of her teeth,  
Releas'd the princely Lyon from the net.

*Cor.* Kind Palmer, which so much desir'st to heare  
The tragick tale of my vnhappy youth:  
Know this in brieft, I am the haplesse daughter  
Of *Leir*, sometimes King of Brittany.

*King.* Why, who debarres his honourable age,  
From being still the King of Brittany?

650 *Cor.* None, but himselfe hath dispossesst himselfe,  
And giuen all his Kingdome to the Kings  
Of Cornwall and of Cambria, with my sisters.

*King.* Hath he giuen nothing to your louely selfe?

*Cor.* He lou'd me not, & therfore gaue me nothing,  
Only because I could not flatter him:  
And in this day of tryumph to my sisters,  
Doth Fortune tryumph in my ouerthrow.

*King.* Sweet Lady, say there should come a King,  
As good as eyther of your sisters husbands,  
660 To craue your loue, would you accept of him?

*Cor.* Oh, doe not mocke with those in misery,  
Nor do not think, though fortune haue the power,  
To spoyle mine honour, and debase my state,  
That she hath any interest in my mind:  
For if the greatest Monarch on the earth,  
Should sue to me in this extremity,  
Except my heart could loue, and heart could like,  
Better then any that I euer saw,  
His great estate no more should moue my mind,  
670 Then mountaynes moue by blast of euery wind.

*King.* Think not, sweet Nymph, tis holy Palmers guise,  
To griued soules fresh torments to deuise:  
Therefore in witnesse of my true intent,  
Let heauen and earth beare record of my words:  
There is a young and lusty Gallian King,  
So like to me, as I am to my selfe,  
That earnestly doth craue to haue thy loue,  
And ioyne with thee in *Hymens* sacred bonds.

*Cor.* The like to thee did ne're these eyes behold;

Oh

*and his three daughters.*

Oh liue to adde new torments to my griefe :  
Why didst thou thus intrap me vnawares ?  
Ah Palmer, my estate doth not besit  
A kingly mariage, as the case now stands.  
Whilome when as I liu'd in honours height,  
A Prince perhaps might postulate my loue :  
Now misery, dishonour and disgrace,  
Hath light on me, and quite reuerst the case.  
Thy King will hold thee wise, if thou surcease  
The sute, whereas no dowry will insue.  
Then be aduised, Palmer, what to do :

680

Cease for thy King, seeke for thy selfe to woo.

*King.* Your birth's too high for any, but a King.

*Cor.* My mind is low ynough to loue a Palmer,  
Rather then any King vpon the earth.

690

*King.* O, but you neuer can indure their life,  
Which is so straight and full of penury.

*Cor.* O yes, I can, and happy if I might :  
Ile hold thy Palmers staffe within my hand,  
And thinke it is the Scepter of a Queene.  
Sometime ile set thy Bonnet on my head,  
And thinke I weare a rich imperiall Crowne.  
Sometime ile helpe thee in thy holy prayers,  
And thinke I am with thee in Paradise.  
Thus ile mock fortune, as she mocketh me,  
And neuer will my lovely choyce repent :  
For hauing thee, I shall haue all content.

700

*King.* Twere sin to hold her longer in suspence,  
Since that my soule hath vow'd she shall be mine.

Ah, deare *Cordella*, cordiall to my heart,  
I am no Palmer, as I seeme to be,  
But hither come in this vnknowne disguise,  
To view th'admired beauty of those eyes.  
I am the King of Gallia, gentle mayd,  
(Although thus slenderly accompanied)  
And yet thy vassayle by imperious Loue,  
And sworne to serue thee euerlastingly.

710

*Cor.* What e're you be, of high or low discent,



## *The History of King Leir*

All's one to me, I do request but this:

That as I am, you will accept of me,

720 And I will haue you whatsoe're you be:

Yet well I know, you come of royall race,

I see such sparks of honour in your face:

*Mum.* Haue Palmers weeds such power to win fayre Ladies?

Fayth, then I hope the next that falles is myne:

Vpon condition I no worse might speed,

I would for euer weare a Palmers weed.

I like an honest and playne dealing wench,

That sweares (without exceptions) I will haue you.

730 These foppets, that know not whether to loue a man or no, except they first go aske their mothers leaue, by this hand, I hate them ten tymes worse then poyson.

*King.* What resteth then our happinesse to procure?

*Mum.* Fayth, go to Church, to make the matter sure.

*King.* It shall be so, because the world shall say,

King *Leirs* three daughters were wedded in one day:

The celebration of this happy chaunce,

We will deferre, vntill we come to Fraunce.

*Mum.* I like the wooing, that's not long a doing.

Well, for her sake, I know what I know:

740 He neuer marry whilest I liue,

Except I haue one of these Brittiſh Ladyes,

My humour is alienated from the mayds of Fraunce. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. viii*

*Enter Perillus solus.*

*Per.* The King hath dispossessed himselfe of all,

Those to aduaunce, which scarce will giue him thanks:

His youngest daughter he hath turnd away,

And no man knowes what is become of her.

He sojournes now in Cornwall with the eldest,

Who flattered him, vntill she did obtayne

750 That at his hands, which now she doth possesse:

And now she sees hee hath no more to giue,

It grieues her heart to see her father liue.

Oh, whom should man trust in this wicked age,

When children thus against their parents rage?

But he, the myrrour of mild patience,

Puts

*and his three daughters.*

Puts vp all wrongs, and neuer giues reply :  
Yet shames she not in most opprobrious sort,  
To call him foole and doted to his face,  
And sets her Parasites of purpose oft,  
In scoffing wise to offer him disgrace.  
Oh yron age ! O times ! O monstrous, vilde,  
When parents are contemned of the child !  
His pension she hath halfe restrain'd from him,  
And will, e're long, the other halfe, I feare :  
For she thinks nothing is bestowde in vayne,  
But that which doth her fathers life maintayne.  
Trust not alliance ; but trust strangers rather,  
Since daughters proue disloyall to the father.  
Well, I will counsell him the best I can :  
Would I were able to redresse his wrong.  
Yet what I can, vnto my vtmost power,  
He shall be sure of to the latest houre.

760

770

*Exit.*

*Enter Gonorill, and Skalliger.*

*Sc. ix*

*Gon.* I prithy, *Skalliger*, tell me what thou thinkest :  
Could any woman of our dignity  
Endure such quips and peremptory taunts,  
As I do daily from my doting father ?  
Doth't not suffice that I him keepe of almes,  
Who is not able for to keepe himselfe ?  
But as if he were our better, he should thinke  
To check and snap me vp at euery word.  
I cannot make me a new fashioned gowne,  
And set it forth with more then common cost ;  
But his old doting doltish withered wit,  
Is sure to giue a fencelesse check for it.  
I cannot make a banquet extraordinary,  
To grace my selfe, and spread my name abroad,  
But he, old foole, is captious by and by,  
And sayth, the cost would well suffice for twice.  
Iudge then, I pray, what reason ist, that I  
Should stand alone charg'd with his vaine expence,  
And that my sister *Ragan* should go free,  
To whom he gaue as much, as vnto me ?

780

790

## *The History of King Leir*

I prithy, *Skalliger*, tell me, if thou know,  
By any meanes to rid me of this woe.

*Skal.* Your many fauours still bestowde on me,  
Binde me in duty to aduise your Grace,  
How you may soonest remedy this ill.

The large allowance which he hath from you,  
800 Is that which makes him so forget himselfe:  
Therefore abbridge it halfe, and you shall see,  
That hauing lesse, he will more thankfull be:  
For why, abundance maketh vs forget  
The fountaynes whence the benefits do spring.

*Gon.* Well, *Skalliger*, for thy kynd aduice herein,  
I will not be vngratefull, if I liue:

I haue restrayned halfe his portion already,  
And I will presently restrayne the other,  
That hauing no meanes to releue himselfe,

810 He may go seeke elsewhere for better helpe. *Exit.*

*Skal.* Go, viperous woman, shame to all thy sexe:  
The heauens, no doubt, will punish thee for this:  
And me a villayne, that to curry fauour,  
Haue giuen the daughter counsell 'gainst the father.  
But vs the world doth this experience giue,  
That he that cannot flatter, cannot liue. *Exit.*

Sc. x *Enter King of Cornwall, Leir, Perillus & Nobles.*

*Corn.* Father, what ayleth you to be so sad?

Me thinks, you frollike not as you were wont.

820 *Leir.* The neerer we do grow vnto our graues,  
The lesse we do delight in worldly ioyes.

*Corn.* But if a man can frame himselfe to myrth,  
It is a meane for to prolong his life.

*Leir.* Then welcome sorrow, *Leirs* only friend,  
Who doth desire his troubled dayes had end.

*Corn.* Comfort your selfe, father, here comes your daughter,  
Who much will grieue, I know, to see you sad. *Enter*

*Leir.* But more doth grieue, I feare, to see me liue. *Gonorill.*

*Corn.* My *Gonorill*, you come in wished time,

830 To put your father from these pensue dumps.  
In fayth, I feare that all things go not well.

*Gon.* What,

*and his three daughters.*

*Gon.* What, do you feare, that I haue angered him?  
Hath he complaynd of me vnto my Lord?  
Ile prouide him a piece of bread and cheefe; ✕  
For in a time heele practife nothing else,  
Then carry tales from one vnto another.  
Tis all his practife for to kindle strife,  
Twixt you, my Lord, and me your louing wife:  
But I will take an order, if I can,  
To cease th'effect, where first the cause began.

840

*Corn.* Sweet, be not angry in a partiall cause,  
He ne're complaynd of thee in all his life.  
Father, you must not weygh a womans words.

*Leir.* Alas, not I: poore soule, she breeds yong bones,  
And that is it makes her so tutchy sure.

*Gon.* What, breeds yong bones already! you will make  
An honest woman of me then, belike.  
O vild olde wretch! who euer heard the like,  
That seeketh thus his owne child to defame?

*Corn.* I cannot stay to heare this discord sound. *Exit.* 850

*Gon.* For any one that loues your company,  
You may go pack, and seeke some other place,  
To sowe the seed of discord and disgrace. *Exit.*

*Leir.* Thus, say or do the best that e're I can,  
Tis wrested straight into another sence.  
This punishment my heauy sinnes deserue,  
And more then this ten thousand thousand times:  
Else aged *Leir* them could neuer find  
Cruell to him, to whom he hath bin kind.

Why do I ouer-loue my selfe, to see  
The course of nature quite reuerst in me?

860

Ah, gentle Death, if euer any wight  
Did wish thy presence with a perfit zeale:  
Then come, I pray thee, euen with all my heart,  
And end my sorrowes with thy fatall dart. *He weepes.*

*Per.* Ah, do not so disconsolate your selfe,  
Nor dew your aged cheeks with wasting teares.

*Leir.* What man art thou that takest any pity  
Vpon the worthlesse state of old *Leir*?

D

*Per.* One,

## *The History of King Leir*

870 *Per.* One, who doth beare as great a share of griefe,  
As if it were my dearest fathers case.

*Leir.* Ah, good my friend, how ill art thou aduise,  
For to comfort with miserable men :

Go learne to flatter, where thou mayst in time  
Get fauour 'mongst the mighty, and so clyme :  
For now I am so poore and full of want,  
As that I ne're can recompence thy loue.

*Per.* What's got by flattery, doth not long indure ;  
And men in fauour liue not most secure.

880 *My conscience tels me, if I should forsake you,  
I were the hatefulst excrement on the earth :  
Which well do know, in course of former time,  
How good my Lord hath bin to me and mine.*

*Leir.* Did I ere rayse thee higher then the rest  
Of all thy ancestors which were before ?

*Per.* I ne're did seeke it ; but by your good Grace,  
I still inioyed my owne with quietnesse.

*Leir.* Did I ere giue thee liuing, to increase  
The due reuennues which thy father left ?

890 *Per.* I had ynough, my Lord, and hauing that,  
What should you need to giue me any more ?

*Leir.* Oh, did I euer dispossesse my selfe,  
And giue thee halfe my Kingdome in good will ?

*Per.* Alas, my Lord, there were no reason, why  
You should haue such a thought, to giue it me.

*Leir.* Nay, if thou talke of reason, then be mute ;  
For with good reason I can thee confute.  
If they, which first by natures sacred law,  
Do owe to me the tribute of their liues ;  
900 If they to whom I alwayes haue bin kinde,  
And bountifull beyond comparifon ;  
If they, for whom I haue vn done my selfe,  
And brought my age vnto this extreme want,  
Do now reiect, contemne, despise, abhor me,  
What reason moueth thee to sorrow for me ?

*Per.* Where reason fayles, let teares confirme my loue,  
And speake how much your passions do me moue.

Ah,

*and his three daughters.*

Ah, good my Lord, condemne not all for one :  
You haue two daughters left, to whom I know  
You shall be welcome, if you please to go.

910

*Leir.* Oh, how thy words adde sorrow to my soule,  
To thinke of my vnkindnesse to *Cordella* !  
Whom causelesse I did dispossesse of all,  
Vpon th'vnkind suggestions of her sisters :  
And for her sake, I thinke this heavy doome  
Is false on me, and not without desert :  
Yet vnto *Ragan* was I alwayes kinde,  
And gaue to her the halfe of all I had :  
It may be, if I should to her repayre,  
She would be kinder, and intreat me fayre.

920

*Per.* No doubt she would, & practise ere't be long,  
By force of Armes for to redresse your wrong.

*Leir.* Well, since thou doest aduise me for to go,  
I am resolu'd to try the worst of wo. *Exeunt.*

*Enter Ragan solus.*

Sc. xi

*Rag.* How may I blesse the howre of my natiuity,  
Which bodeth vnto me such happy Starres !  
How may I thank kind fortune, that vouchsafes  
To all my actions, such desir'd euent !  
I rule the King of Cambria as I please :  
The States are all obedient to my will ;  
And looke what ere I say, it shall be so ;  
Not any one, that dareth answere no.  
My eldest sister liues in royall state,  
And wanteth nothing fitting her degree :  
Yet hath she such a cooling card withall,  
As that her hony sauoureth much of gall.  
My father with her is quarter-master still,  
And many times restraynes her of her will :  
But if he were with me, and seru'd me so,  
Ide send him packing some where else to go.  
Ide entertayne him with such slender cost,  
That he should quickly wish to change his host. *Exit.*

930

940

*Enter Cornwall, Gonorill, and attendants.*

Sc. xii

*Corn.* Ah, *Gonorill*, what dire vnhappy chaunce

## *The History of King Leir*

- Hath sequestred thy father from our presence,  
That no report can yet be heard of him?  
Some great vnkindnesse hath bin offred him,  
Exceeding far the bounds of patience:  
950 Else all the world shall neuer me perswade,  
He would forsake vs without notice made.
- Gon.* Alas, my Lord, whom doth it touch so neere,  
Or who hath interest in this grieffe, but I,  
Whom sorrow had brought to her longest home,  
But that I know his qualities so well?  
I know, he is but stolne vpon my sister  
At vnawares, to see her how she fares,  
And spend a little time with her, to note  
How all things goe, and how she likes her choyce:  
960 And when occasion serues, heele steale from her,  
And vnawares returne to vs agayne.  
Therefore, my Lord, be frolick, and resolute  
To see my father here agayne e're long.
- Corn.* I hope so too; but yet to be more sure,  
Ile send a Poste immediately to know  
Whether he be arriued there or no. *Exit.*
- Gon.* But I will intercept the Messenger,  
And temper him before he doth depart,  
With sweet perswasions, and with sound rewards,  
970 That his report shall ratify my speech,  
And make my Lord cease further to inquire.  
If he be not gone to my sisters Court,  
As sure my mind presageth that he is,  
He happely may, by traueilling vnknowne wayes,  
Fall sicke, and as a common passenger,  
Be dead and buried: would God it were so well;  
For then there were no more to do, but this,  
He went away, and none knowes where he is.  
But say he be in Cambria with the King,  
980 And there exclayme against me, as he will:  
I know he is as welcome to my sister,  
As water is into a broken ship.  
Well, after him Ile send such thunderclaps

*and his three daughters.*

Of flander, scandall, and inuented tales,  
That all the blame shall be remou'd from me,  
And vnperceiu'd rebound vpon himsele.  
Thus with one nayle another Ile expell,  
And make the world iudge, that I vſide him well.

*Enter the Messenger that should go to Cambria,  
with a letter in his hand.*

990

*Gon.* My honest friend, whither away so fast?

*Mes.* To Cambria, Madam, with letters frō the king.

*Gon.* To whom?

*Mes.* Vnto your father, if he be there.

*Gon.* Let me see them. *She opens them.*

*Mes.* Madam, I hope your Grace will stand  
Betweene me and my neck-verse, if I be  
Calld in question, for opening the Kings letters.

*Gon.* 'Twas I that opened them, it was not thou.

*Mes.* I, but you need not care: and so must I,  
A handsome man, be quickly trust vp,  
And when a man's hang'd, all the world cannot saue him.

1000

*Gon.* He that hangs thee, were better hang his father,  
Or that but hurts thee in the least degree.  
I tell thee, we make great account of thee.

*Mes.* I am o're-joy'd, I surfeit of sweet words:  
Kind Queene, had I a hundred liues, I would  
Spend ninety nyne of them for you, for that word.

*Gon.* I, but thou wouldst keepe one life still,  
And that's as many as thou art like to haue.

1010

*Mes.* That one life is not too deare for my good Queene; this  
sword, this buckler, this head, this heart, these hands, armes,  
legs, tripes, bowels, and all the members else whatsoeuer, are at  
your dispose; vse me, trust me, commaund me: if I sayle in any  
thing, tye me to a dung cart, and make a Scauengers horſe of  
me, and whip me, so long as I haue any skin on my back.

*Gon.* In token of further imployment, take that.

*Flings him a purse.*

*Mes.* A strong Bond, a firme Obligation, good in law, good  
in law: if I keepe not the condition, let my necke be the forfey-  
ture of my negligence.

1020



## *The History of King Leir*

*Gon.* I like thee well, thou hast a good tounge.

*Mef.* And as bad a tounge if it be set on it, as any Oysterwife at Billingsgate hath: why, I haue made many of my neighbours forsake their houses with rayling vpon them, and go dwell else where; and so by my meanes houses haue bin good cheape in our parish: My tounge being well whetted with choller, is more sharpe then a Razer of Palermo.

*Gon.* O, thou art a fit man for my purpose.

1030 *Mef.* Commend me not, sweet Queene, before you try me.

✓ As my deserts are, so do think of me.

✓ *Gon.* Well sayd, then this is thy tryall: Instead of carrying the Kings letters to my father, carry thou these letters to my sister, which containe matter quite contrary to the other: there shal she be giuen to vnderstand, that my father hath detracted her, giuen out slaundrous speeches against her; and that hee hath most intollerably abused me, set my Lord and me at variance, and made mutinyes amongst the commons.

These things (although it be not so)

1040 Yet thou must affirme them to be true,  
With othes and protestations as will serue,  
To driue my sister out of loue with him,  
And cause my will accomplished to be.  
This do, thou winst my fauour for euer,  
And makest a hye way of preferment to thee  
And all thy friends.

*Mess.* It sufficeth, conceyt it is already done:

I will so tounge-whip him, that I will  
Leaue him as bare of credit, as a Poultier

1050 Leanes a Cony, when she pulls off his skin.

*Gon.* Yet there is a further matter.

*Mef.* I thirst to heare it.

*Gon.* If my sister thinketh conuenient, as my letters importeth, to make him away, hast thou the heart to effect it?

*Mess.* Few words are best in so small a matter:  
These are but trifles. By this booke I will.

*kisse the paper.*

*Gon.* About,

*and his three daughters.*

*Gon.* About it presently, I long till it be done.

*Mef.* I fly, I fly. *Exeunt.*

1060

*Enter Cordella solus.*

*Sc. xiii*

I haue bin ouer-negligent to day,  
In going to the Temple of my God,  
To render thanks for all his benefits,  
Which he miraculously hath bestowed on me,  
In rayling me out of my meane estate,  
When as I was deuoyd of worldly friends,  
And placing me in such a sweet content,  
As far exceeds the reach of my desires.  
My kingly husband, myrroure of his time,  
For zeale, for iustice, kindnesse, and for care  
To God, his subiects, me, and Common weale,  
By his appoyntment was ordayned for me.  
I cannot wish the thing that I do want;  
I cannot want the thing but I may haue,  
Sauer only this which I shall ne're obtayne,  
My fathers loue, oh this I ne're shall gayne.  
I would abstayne from any nutryment,  
And pyne my body to the very bones:  
Bare foote I would on pilgrimage set forth  
Vnto the furthest quarters of the earth,  
And all my life time would I sackcloth weare,  
And mourning-wife powre dust vpon my head:  
So he but to forgiue me once would please,  
That his grey haire might go to heauen in peace.  
And yet I know not how I him offended,  
Or wherein iustly I haue deserued blame.  
Oh sisters! you are much to blame in this,  
It was not he, but you that did me wrong.  
Yet God forgiue both him, and you and me,  
Euen as I doe in perfit charity.

1070

1080

1090

I will to Church, and pray vnto my Sauour,  
That ere I dye, I may obtayne his fauour. *Exit.*

*Enter Leir and Perillus sayntly.*

*Sc. xiv*

*Per.* Rest on me, my Lord, and stay your selfe,  
The way seemes tedious to your aged lymmes.

## *The History of King Leir*

*Leir.* Nay, rest on me, kind friend, and stay thy selfe,  
Thou art as old as I, but more kind.

*Per.* Ah, good my Lord, it ill befits, that I  
1100 Should leane vpon the person of a King.

*Leir.* But it fits worse, that I should bring thee forth,  
That had no cause to come along with me,  
Through these vncouth paths, and tirefull wayes,  
And neuer ease thy faynting limmes a whit.  
Thou hast left all, I, all to come with me,  
And I, for all, haue nought to guerdon thee.

*Per.* Cease, good my Lord, to aggrauate my woes,  
With these kind words, which cuts my heart in two,  
To think your will should want the power to do.

1110 *Leir.* Cease, good *Perillus*, for to call me Lord,  
And think me but the shaddow of my selfe.

*Per.* That honourable title will I giue,  
Vnto my Lord, so long as I do liue.  
Oh, be of comfort ; for I see the place  
Whereas your daughter keeps her residence.  
And loe, in happy time the Cambrian Prince  
Is here arriu'd, to gratify our comming.

*Enter the Prince of Cambria, Ragan and Nobles : looke  
upon them, and whisper together.*

1120 *Leir.* Were I best speak, or sit me downe and dye ?  
I am asham'd to tell this heavy tale.

*Per.* Then let me tell it, if you please, my Lord :  
Tis shame for them that were the cause thereof.

*Cam.* What two old men are those that seeme so sad ?  
Me thinks, I should remember well their looks.

*Rag.* No, I mistake not, sure it is my father :  
I must dissemble kindnesse now of force.

*She runneth to him, and kneeles downe, saying :*  
Father, I bid you welcome, full of griefe,  
1130 To see your Grace vsde thus vnworthily,  
And ill befitting for your reuerend age,  
To come on foot a iourney so indurable.  
Oh, what disafter chaunce hath bin the cause,  
To make your cheeks so hollow, spare and leane ?

He

*and his three daughters.*

He cannot speake for weeping: for Gods loue, come.  
Let vs refresh him with some needfull things,  
And at more leysure we may better know,  
Whence springs the ground of this vnlookt for wo.

*Cam.* Come, father, e're we any further talke,  
You shall refresh you after this weary walk. *Excunt, manet* 1140

*Rag.* Comes he to me with finger in the eye, *Ragan.*  
To tell a tale against my sifter here?

Whom I do know, he greatly hath abus'd:  
And now like a contentious crafty wretch,  
He first begins for to complayne himselfe,  
When as himselfe is in the greatest fault.

Ile not be partiall in my sifers cause,  
Nor yet belecue his doting vayne reports:

Who for a trifle (safely) I dare say,

Vpon a spleene is stolen thence away: 1150

And here (forsooth) he hopeth to haue harbour,

And to be moan'd and made on like a child:

But ere't be long, his comming he shall curse,

And truly say, he came from bad to worse:

Yet will I make fayre weather, to procure  
Conuenient meanes, and then ile strike it sure. *Exit.*

*Enter Messenger solus.*

*Sc. xv*

*Mes.* Now happily I am arriued here,  
Before the stately Palace of the Cambrian King:

If *Leir* be here safe-seated, and in rest,

To rowse him from it I will do my best. *Enter Ragan.* 1160

Now bags of gold, your vertue is (no doubt)

To make me in my message bold and stout.

The King of heauen preferue your Maiesty.

And send your Highnesse euerlasting raigne.

*Ra.* Thanks, good my friend; but what imports thy message?

*Mes.* Kind greetings from the Cornwall Queene:

The residue these letters will declare.

*She opens the letters.*

*Rag.* How fares our royall sifter? 1170

*Mes.* I did leaue her at my parting, in good health.

*She reads the letter, frownes and stamps.*

E

See

## *The History of King Leir*

See how her colour comes and goes agayne,  
Now red as scarlet, now as pale as ash :  
She how she knits her brow, and bytes her lips,  
And stamps, and makes a dumbe shew of disdayne,  
Mixt with reuenge, and violent extreames.  
Here will be more worke and more crownes for me.

- Rag.* Alas, poore soule, and hath he vſide her thus ?  
1180 And is he now come hither, with intent  
To set diuorce betwixt my Lord and me ?  
Doth he giue out, that he doth heare report,  
That I do rule my husband as I list,  
And therefore meanes to alter so the case,  
That I shall know my Lord to be my head ?  
Well, it were best for him to take good heed,  
Or I will make him hop without a head,  
For his presumption, dottard that he is.  
In Cornwall he hath made such mutinies,  
1190 First, setting of the King against the Queene ;  
Then stirring vp the Commons 'gainst the King ;  
That had he there continued any longer,  
He had bin call'd in question for his fact.  
So vpon that occasion thence he fled,  
And comes thus slyly stealing vnto vs :  
And now already since his comming hither,  
My Lord and he are growne in such a league,  
That I can haue no conference with his Grace :  
I feare, he doth already intimate  
1200 Some forged cauillations 'gainst my state :  
Tis therefore best to cut him off in time,  
Lest slanderous rumours once abroad disperst,  
It is too late for them to be reuerst.  
Friend, as the tennour of these letters shewes,  
My sister puts great confidence in thee.  
*Mef.* She neuer yet committed trust to me,  
But that (I hope) she found me alwayes saythfull :  
So will I be to any friend of hers,  
That hath occasion to imploy my helpe.  
1210 *Rag.* Hast thou the heart to act a stratagem,  
And

*and his three daughters.*

And giue a stabbe or two, if need require?

*Mef.* I haue a heart compact of Adamant,  
Which neuer knew what melting pittie meant.  
I weigh no more the murdring of a man,  
Then I respect the cracking of a Flea,  
When I doe catch her byting on my skin.  
If you will haue your husband or your father,  
Or both of them sent to another world,  
Do but commaund me doo't, it shall be done.

*Rag.* It is ynough, we make no doubt of thee:  
Meet vs to morrow here, at nyne a clock:  
Meane while, farewell, and drink that for my sake. *Exit.*

1220

*Mef.* I, this is it will make me do the deed:  
Oh, had I euery day such customers,  
This were the gainefulst trade in Christendome!  
A purse of gold giu'n for a paltry stabbe!  
Why, heres a wench that longs to haue a stabbe.  
Wel, I could giue it her, and ne're hurt her neither.

*Enter the Gallian King, and Cordella.*

*Sc. xvi*

*King.* When will these clouds of sorrow once disperse,  
And smiling ioy tryumph vpon thy brow?  
When will this Scene of sadnesse haue an end,  
And pleasant acts insue, to moue delight?  
When will my louely Queene cease to lament,  
And take some comfort to her griued thoughts?  
If of thy selfe thou daignst to haue no care,  
Yet pittie me, whom thy grieffe makes despayre.

1230

*Cor.* O, grieue not you, my Lord, you haue no cause;  
Let not my passions moue your mind a whit:  
For I am bound by nature, to lament  
For his ill will, that life to me first lent.  
If so the stocke be dryed with disdayne,  
Withered and fere the branch must needes remaine.

1240

*King.* But thou art now graft in another stock;  
I am the stock, and thou the louely branch:  
And from my root continuall sap shall flow,  
To make thee flourish with perpetuall spring.  
Forget thy father and thy kindred now,

## *The History of King Leir*

Since they forsake thee like inhumane beastes,  
1150 Thinke they are dead, since all their kindnesse dyes,  
And bury them, where black obliuion lyes.  
Think not thou art the daughter of old *Leir*,  
Who did vnkindly disinherit thee:  
But think thou art the noble Gallian Queene,  
And wife to him that dearely loueth thee:  
Embrace the ioyes that present with thee dwell,  
Let sorrow packe and hide her selfe in hell.

*Cord.* Not that I misse my country or my kinne,  
My old acquaintance or my ancient friends,  
1160 Doth any whit distemperate my mynd,  
Knowing you, which are more deare to me,  
Then Country, kin, and all things els can be.  
Yet pardon me, my gracious Lord, in this:  
For what can stop the course of natures power? <  
As easy is it for foure-footed beastes, <  
To stay themselves vpon the liquid ayre,  
And mount aloft into the element,  
And ouerstrip the feathered Fowles in flight:  
As easy is it for the slimy Fish,  
1170 To liue and thrue without the helpe of water:  
As easy is it for the Blackamoore,  
To wash the tawny colour from his skin,  
Which all oppose against the course of nature,  
As I am able to forget my father.

*King.* Myrrour of vertue, Phoenix of our age!  
Too kind a daughter for an vnkind father,  
Be of good comfort; for I will dispatch  
Ambassadors immediately for Brittainne,  
Vnto the King of Cornwalls Court, whereas  
1180 Your father keepeth now his residence,  
And in the kindest maner him intreat,  
That setting former grieuances apart,  
He will be pleasde to come and visit vs.  
If no intreaty will suffice the turne,  
Ile offer him the halfe of all my Crowne:  
If that moues not, weele furnish out a Fleet,

And



*and his three daughters.*

And sayle to Cornwall for to visit him;  
And there you shall be firmly reconcilde  
In perfit loue, as earst you were before.

*Cor.* Where tounge cannot sufficient thanks afford,  
The King of heauen remunerate my Lord.

*King.* Only be blithe, and frolick (sweet) with me:  
This and much more ile do to comfort thee.

*Enter Messenger solus.*

1290

*Sc. xvii*

*Mef.* It is a world to see now I am flush,  
How many friends I purchase euery where!  
How many seekes to creepe into my fauour,  
And kisse their hands, and bend their knees to me!  
No more, here comes the Queene, now shall I know her mind,  
And hope for to deriue more crownes from her. *Enter Rag.*

1300

*Rag.* My friend, I see thou mind'st thy promise well,  
And art before me here, me thinks, to day.

*Mef.* I am a poore man, and it like your Grace;  
But yet I alwayes loue to keepe my word.

*Ra.* Wel, keepe thy word with me, & thou shalt see,  
That of a poore man I will make thee rich.

*Mef.* I long to heare it, it might haue bin dispatcht,  
If you had told me of it yesternight.

*Ra.* It is a thing of right strange consequence,  
And well I cannot vtter it in words.

1310

*Mef.* It is more strange, that I am not by this  
Beside my selfe, with longing for to heare it.  
Were it to meet the Deuill in his denne,  
And try a bout with him for a scratcht face,  
Ide vndertake it, if you would but bid me.

*Ra.* Ah, good my friend, that I should haue thee do,  
Is such a thing, as I do shame to speake;  
Yet it must needs be done.

*Mef.* Ile speak it for thee, Queene: shall I kill thy father?  
I know tis that, and if it be so, say. *Rag. I.*

1320

*Mef.* Why, thats ynough.

*Rag.* And yet that is not all.

*Mef.* What else?

*Rag.* Thou must kill that old man that came with him.



## *The History of King Leir*

*Mef.* Here are two hands, for eche of them is one.

*Rag.* And for eche hand here is a recompence.

*Giue him two purses.*

*Mef.* Oh, that I had ten hands by myracle,  
I could teare ten in pieces with my teeth,  
1330 So in my mouth yould put a purse of gold.  
But in what maner must it be effected?

*Rag.* To morrow morning ere the breake of day,  
I by a wyle will send them to the thicket,  
That is about some two myles from the Court,  
And promise them to meet them there my selfe,  
Because I must haue priuate conference,  
About some newes I haue receyu'd from Cornwall.  
This is ynough, I know, they will not fayle,  
And then be ready for to play thy part :  
1340 Which done, thou mayst right easily escape,  
And no man once mistrust thee for the fact :  
But yet, before thou prosecute the act,  
Shew him the letter, which my sifter sent,  
There let him read his owne inditement first,  
And then proceed to execution :  
But see thou faynt not ; for they will speake fayre.

*Mef.* Could he speak words as pleasing as the pipe  
Of *Mercury*, which charm'd the hundred eyes  
Of watchfull *Argos*, and inforc'd him sleepe :  
1350 Yet here are words so pleasing to my thoughts, *To the purse.*  
As quite shall take away the sound of his. *Exit.*

*Rag.* About it then, and when thou hast dispatcht,  
He find a meanes to send thee after him. *Exit.*

*Sc. xviii*

*Enter Cornwall and Gonorill.*

*Corn.* I wonder that the Messenger doth stay,  
Whom we dispatcht for Cambria so long since :  
If that his answere do not please vs well,  
And he do shew good reason for delay,  
He teach him how to dally with his King,  
1360 And to detain vs in such long suspence.

*Gon.* My Lord, I thinke the reason may be this :  
My father meanes to come along with him ;

And

*and his three daughters.*

And therefore tis his pleasure he shall stay,  
For to attend vpon him on the way.

*Corn.* It may be so, and therefore till I know  
The truth thereof, I will suspend my iudgement.

*Enter Seruant.*

*Ser.* And't like your Grace, there is an Ambassador  
Arriued from Gallia, and craues admittance to your Maiefty.

*Corn.* From Gallia? what should his message  
Hither import? is not your father happely  
Gone thither? well, whatsoere it be,  
Bid him come in, he shall haue audience. 1370

*Enter Ambassador.*

What newes from Gallia? speake Ambassador.

*Am.* The noble King and Queene of Gallia first salutes,  
By me, their honourable father, my Lord *Leir*:  
Next, they commend them kindly to your Graces,  
As those whose wellfare they intirely with.  
Letters I haue to deliuer to my Lord *Leir*,  
And presents too, if I might speake with him. 1380

*Gon.* If you might speak with him? why, do you thinke,  
We are afrajd that you should speake with him?

*Am.* Pardon me, Madam; for I thinke not so,  
But say so only, 'cause he is not here.

*Corn.* Indeed, my friend, vpon some vrgent cause,  
He is at this time absent from the Court:  
But if a day or two you here repose,  
Tis very likely you shall haue him here,  
Or else haue certayne notice where he is. 1390

*Gon.* Are not we worthy to receiue your message?

*Am.* I had in charge to do it to himselfe.

*Gon.* It may be then 'twill not be done in haste. *to herselfe.*  
How doth my sister brooke the ayre of Fraunce?

*Am.* Exceeding well, and neuer sicke one houre,  
Since first she set her foot vpon the shore.

*Gon.* I am the more sorry.

*Am.* I hope, not so, Madam.

*Gon.* Didst thou not say, that she was euer sicke,  
Since the first houre that she arriued there? 1400

## *The History of King Leir*

*Amb.* No, Madam, I sayd quite contrary.

*Gon.* Then I mistooke thee.

*Corn.* Then she is merry, if she haue her health.

*Am.* Oh no, her grieve exceeds, vntill the time,  
That she be reconcil'd vnto her father.

*Gon.* God continue it.

*Am.* What, madam?

*Gon.* Why, her health.

*Am.* Amen to that: but God release her grieve,  
1410 And send her father in a better mind,  
Then to continue alwayes so vnkind.

*Corn.* Ile be a mediator in her cause,  
And seeke all meanes to expiat his wrath.

*Am.* Madam, I hope your Grace will do the like.

*Gon.* Should I be a meane to exasperate his wrath  
Against my sifter, whom I loue so deare? no, no.

*Am.* To expiate or mittigate his wrath:  
For he hath misconceyued without a cause.

*Gon.* O, I, what else?

1420 *Am.* Tis pity it should be so, would it were otherwise.

*Gon.* It were great pity it should be otherwise.

*Am.* Then how, Madam?

*Gon.* Then that they should be reconcilde againe.

*Am.* It shewes you beare an honourable mind.

*Gon.* It shewes thy vnderstanding to be blind, *Speakes to*  
And that thou hadst need of an Interpreter: *her selfe.*  
Well, I will know thy message ere't be long,  
And find a meane to crosse it, if I can.

*Corn.* Come in, my friend, and frolick in our Court,  
1430 Till certayne notice of my father come. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. xix* *Enter Leir and Perillus.*

*Per.* My Lord, you are vp to day before your houre,  
Tis newes to you to be abroad so rathe.

*Leir.* Tis newes indeed, I am so extreme heauy,  
That I can scarcely keepe my eye-lids open.

*Per.* And so am I, but I impute the cause  
To rising sooner then we vse to do.

*Leir.* Hither my daughter meanes to come disguis'd:  
Ile

*and his three daughters.*

He sit me downe, and read vntill she come.

*Pull out a booke and sit downe.*

1440

*Per.* Sheele not be long, I warrant you, my Lord:  
But say, a couple of these they call good fellowes,  
Should step out of a hedge, and set vpon vs,  
We were in good case for to answere them.

*Leir.* 'Twere not for vs to stand vpon our hands.

*Per.* I feare, we scant should stand vpon our legs.  
But how should we do to defend our selues?

*Leir.* Euen pray to God, to blesse vs frō their hands:  
For seruient prayer much ill hap withstands.

*Per.* He sit and pray with you for company;  
Yet was I ne're so heauy in my life.

1450

*They fall both asleepe.*

*Enter the Messenger or murtherer with two  
daggers in his hands.*

*Mess.* Were it not a mad iest, if two or three of my professiō  
should meet me, and lay me downe in a ditch, and play robbe  
thiefe with me, & perforce take my gold away from me, whilest  
I act this stratagem, and by this meanes the gray beards should  
escape? Fayth, when I were at liberty againe, I would make no  
more to do, but go to the next tree, and there hang my selfe.

1460

*See them and start.*

But stay, me thinks, my youthes are here already,  
And with pure zeale haue prayed themselues asleepe.  
I thinke, they know to what intent they came,  
And are prouided for another world.

*He takes their bookes away.*

Now could I stab them brauely, while they sleepe,  
And in a maner put them to no payne;  
And doing so, I shewed them mighty friendship:  
For feare of death is worse then death it selfe.  
But that my sweet Queene will'd me for to shew  
This letter to them, ere I did the deed.  
Masse, they begin to stirre: ile stand aside;  
So shall I come vpon them vnawares.

1470

*They wake and rise.*

*Leir.* I maruell, that my daughter stayes so long.

F

*Per.* I

## *The History of King Leir*

*Per.* I feare, we did mistake the place, my Lord.

*Leir.* God graunt we do not miscarry in the place :

I had a short nap, but so full of dread,

1480 As much amazeth me to think thereof.

*Per.* Feare not, my Lord, dreames are but fantasies,  
And slight imaginations of the brayne.

*Mef.* Perswade him so ; but ile make him and you  
Confesse, that dreames do often proue too true.

*Per.* I pray, my Lord, what was the effect of it ?  
I may go neere to gesse what it pretends.

*Mef.* Leaue that to me, I will expound the dreame.

*Leir.* Me thought, my daughters, *Gonorill & Ragan*,  
Stood both before me with such grim aspects,  
1490 Eche brandishing a Faulchion in their hand,  
Ready to lop a lymme off where it fell,  
And in their other hands a naked poynyard,  
Wherwith they stabd me in a hundred places,  
And to their thinking left me there for dead :  
But then my youngest daughter, fayre *Cordella*,  
Came with a boxe of Balsome in her hand,  
And powred it into my bleeding wounds,  
By whose good meanes I was recouered well,  
In perfit health, as earst I was before :

1500 And with the feare of this I did awake,  
And yet for feare my feeble ioynts do quake.

*Mef.* Ile make you quake for something presently.  
Stand, Stand. *They reele.*

*Leir.* We do, my friend, although with much adoe.

*Mef.* Deliuer, deliuer.

*Per.* Deliuer vs, good Lord, from such as he.

*Mef.* You should haue prayed before, while it was time,  
And then perhaps, you might haue scapt my hands :

But you, like faithfull watch-men, fell asleepe,

1510 The whilst I came and tooke your Halberds from you.

*Shew their Bookes.*

And now you want your weapons of defence,  
How haue you any hope to be deliuered ?  
This comes, because you haue no better stay,

But

*and his three daughters.*

But fall asleepe, when you should watch and pray.

*Leir.* My friend, thou seemst to be a proper man.

*Mef.* Sblood, how the old slaue clawes me by the elbow ?  
He thinks, belike, to scape by scraping thus.

*Per.* And it may be, are in some need of money.

*Mef.* That to be false, behold my euidence.

1520

*Shewes his purses.*

*Leir.* If that I haue will do thee any good,  
I giue it thee, euen with a right good will. *Take it.*

*Per.* Here, take mine too, & wish with all my heart,  
To do thee pleasure, it were twice as much.

*Take his, and weygh them both in his hands.*

*Mef.* Ile none of them, they are too light for me.

*Puts them in his pocket.*

*Leir.* Why then farewell : and if thou haue occasion  
In any thing, to vse me to the Queene,  
'Tis like ynough that I can pleasure thee.

1530

*They proffer to goe.*

*Mef.* Do you heare, do you heare, sir ?  
If I had occasion to vse you to the Queene,  
Would you do one thing for me I should aske ?

*Leir.* I, any thing that lyes within my power.  
Here is my hand vpon it, so farewell. *Proffer to goe.*

*Mef.* Heare you sir, heare you ? pray, a word with you.  
Me thinks, a comely honest ancient man  
Should not dissemble with one for a vantage.  
I know, when I shall come to try this geare,  
You will recant from all that you haue sayd.

1540

*Per.* Mistrust not him, but try him when thou wilt :  
He is her father, therefore may do much.

*Mef.* I know he is, and therefore meane to try him :  
You are his friend too, I must try you both.

*Ambo.* Prithy do, prithy do. *Proffer to go out.*

*Mef.* Stay gray-beards then, and proue men of your words :  
The Queene hath tyed me by a solemne othe,  
Here in this place to see you both dispatcht :  
Now for the safegard of my conscience,  
Do me the pleasure for to kill your selues :

1550

## *The History of King Leir*

So shall you faue me labour for to do it,  
And proue your felues true old men of your words.  
And here I vow in sight of all the world,  
I ne're will trouble you whilst I liue agayne.

*Leir.* Affright vs not with terrour, good my friend,  
Nor strike such feare into our aged hearts.  
Play not the Cat, which dallieth with the mouse;  
1560 And on a sudden maketh her a pray:  
But if thou art markt for the man of death  
To me and to my *Damion*, tell me playne,  
That we may be prepared for the stroke,  
And make our felues fit for the world to come.

*Mef.* I am the last of any mortall race,  
That ere your eyes are likely to behold,  
And hither sent of purpose to this place,  
To giue a finall period to your dayes,  
Which are so wicked, and haue liued so long,  
1570 That your owne children seeke to short your life.

*Leir.* Camst thou from France, of purpose to do this?

*Mef.* From France? zoones, do I looke like a Frenchman?  
Sure I haue not mine owne face on; some body hath chang'd  
faces with me, and I know not of it: But I am sure, my apparell  
is all English. Sirra, what meanest thou to aske that question?  
I could spoyle the fashion of this face for anger. A French face!

*Leir.* Because my daughter, whom I haue offended,  
And at whose hands I haue deseru'd as ill,  
As euer any father did of child,  
1580 Is Queene of Fraunce, no thanks at all to me,  
But vnto God, who my iniustice see.  
If it be so, that shee doth seeke reuenge,  
As with good reason she may iustly do,  
I will most willingly resigne my life,  
A sacrifice to mitigate her ire:  
I neuer will intreat thee to forgiue,  
Because I am vnworthy for to liue.  
Therefore speake soone, & I will soone make speed:  
Whether *Cordella* will'd thee do this deed?

1590 *Mef.* As I am a perfit gentleman, thou speakst French to me:  
I neuer

*and his three daughters.*

I neuer heard *Cordellæes* name before,  
Nor neuer was in Fraunce in all my life :  
I neuer knew thou hadst a daughter there,  
To whom thou didst proue so vnkind a churle :  
But thy owne tounge declares that thou hast bin  
A vyle old wretch, and full of heynous sin.

*Leir.* Ah no, my friend, thou art deceyued much :  
For her except, whom I confesse I wrongd,  
Through doting frenzy, and o're-ielous loue.  
There liues not any vnder heauens bright eye,  
That can conuict me of impiety.

1600

And therefore sure thou dost mistake the marke :  
For I am in true peace with all the world.

*Mef.* You are the fitter for the King of heauen :  
And therefore, for to rid thee of suspence,  
Know thou, the Queenes of Cambria and Cornwall,  
Thy owne two daughters, *Gonorill* and *Ragan*,  
Appoynted me to massacre thee here.

Why wouldst thou then perswade me, that thou art  
In charity with all the world ? but now  
When thy owne issue hold thee in such hate,  
That they haue hyred me t'abbridge thy fate,  
Oh, fy vpon such vyle dissembling breath,  
That would deceyue, euen at the poynt of death.

1610

*Per.* Am I awake, or is it but a dreame ?

*Mef.* Feare nothing, man, thou art but in a dreame,  
And thou shalt neuer wake vntill doomes day,  
By then, I hope, thou wilt haue slept ynough.

*Leir.* Yet, gentle friend, graunt one thing ere I die.

*Mef.* Ile graunt you any thing, except your liues.

1620

*Leir.* Oh, but assure me by some certayne token,  
That my two daughters hyred thee to this deed :  
If I were once resolu'd of that, then I  
Would wish no longer life, but craue to dye.

*Mef.* That to be true, in sight of heauen I sweare.

*Leir.* Sweare not by heauen, for feare of punishmēt :  
The heauens are guiltlesse of such haynous acts.

*Mef.* I sweare by earth, the mother of vs all.



✓  
*The History of King Leir*

*Leir.* Swear not by earth; for she abhors to beare  
1630 Such bastards, as are murderers of her sonnes.

*Meſ.* Why then, by hell, and all the deuils I ſweare.

*Leir.* Swear not by hell; for that ſtands gaping wide,  
To ſwallow thee, and if thou do this deed.

*Thunder and lightning.*

*Meſ.* I would that word were in his belly agayne,  
It hath frighted me euen to the very heart:

This old man is ſome ſtrong Magician:

His words haue turned my mind from this exployt.

Then neyther heauen, earth, nor hell be witneſſe;

1640 But let this paper witneſſe for them all.

*Shewes Gonorils letter.*

Shall I relent, or ſhall I proſecute?

Shall I reſolue, or were I beſt recant?

I will not crack my credit with two Queenes,

To whom I haue already paſt my word.

Oh, but my conſcience for this act doth tell,

I get heauens hate, earths ſcorne, and paynes of hell.

*They bleſſe themſelues.*

*Per.* Oh iuſt *Ieboua*, whoſe almighty power  
1650 Doth gouerne all things in this ſpacious world,

How canſt thou ſuffer ſuch outrageous acts

To be committed without iuſt reuenge?

O viperous generation and accuſt,

To ſeek his blood, whoſe blood did make them firſt!

*Leir.* Ah, my true friend in all extremity,

Let vs ſubmit vs to the will of God:

Things paſt all ſence, let vs not ſeek to know;

It is Gods will, and therefore muſt be ſo.

My friend, I am prepared for the ſtroke:

1660 Strike when thou wilt, and I forgiue thee here,

Euen from the very bottome of my heart.

*Meſ.* But I am not prepared for to ſtrike.

*Leir.* Farewell, *Perillus*, euen the trueſt friend,

That euer liued in aduerſity:

The lateſt kindneſſe ile requeſt of thee,

Is that thou go vnto my daughter *Cordella*,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And carry her her fathers latest blessing:  
Withall desire her, that she will forgiue me;  
For I haue wrongd her without any cause.  
Now, Lord, receyue me, for I come to thee,  
And dye, I hope, in perfitt charity.  
Dispatch, I pray thee, I haue liued too long.

1670

*Mef.* I, but you are vnwise, to send an errand  
By him that neuer meaneth to deliuer it:  
Why, he must go along with you to heauen:  
It were not good you should go all alone.

*Leir.* No doubt, he shal, when by the course of nature,  
He must surrender vp his due to death:  
But that time shall not come, till God permit.

*Mef.* Nay, presently, to beare you company.  
I haue a Pasport for him in my pocket,  
Already seald, and he must needs ride Poste.

1680

*Show a bagge of money.*

*Leir.* The letter which I read, imports not so,  
It only toucheth me, no word of him.

*Mess.* I, but the Queene commaunds it must be so,  
And I am payd for him, as well as you.

*Per.* I, who haue borne you company in life,  
Most willingly will beare a share in death.  
It skilleth not for me, my friend, a whit,  
Nor for a hundred such as thou and I.

1690

*Mef.* Mary, but it doth, fir, by your leaue; your good dayes  
are past: though it bee no matter for you, tis a matter for me,  
proper men are not so rife.

*Per.* Oh, but beware, how thou dost lay thy hand  
Vpon the high anoynted of the Lord:  
O, be aduised ere thou dost begin:  
Dispatch me straight, but meddle not with him.

*Leir.* Friend, thy commission is to deale with me,  
And I am he that hath deserued all:  
The plot was layd to take away my life:  
And here it is, I do intreat thee take it:  
Yet for my sake, and as thou art a man,  
Spare this my friend, that hither with me came:

1700

## *The History of King Leir*

I brought him forth, whereas he had not bin,  
But for good will to beare me company.  
He left his friends, his country and his goods,  
And came with me in most extremity.

Oh, if he should miscarry here and dye,

1710 Who is the cause of it, but only I?

*Mef.* Why that am I, let that ne're trouble thee.

*Leir.* O no, tis I. O, had I now to giue thee  
The monarchy of all the spacious world  
To saue his life, I would bestow it on thee:  
But I haue nothing but these teares and prayers,  
And the submission of a bended knee. *kneele.*  
O, if all this to mercy moue thy mind,  
Spare him, in heauen thou shalt like mercy find.

*Mef.* I am as hard to be moued as another, and yet  
1720 me thinks the strength of their perswasions stirres me  
a little.

*Per.* My friend, if feare of the almighty power  
Haue power to moue thee, we haue sayd ynough:  
But if thy mind be moueable with gold,  
We haue not presently to giue it thee:  
Yet to thy selfe thou mayst do greater good,  
To keepe thy hands still vndefilde from blood:  
For do but well consider with thy selfe,  
When thou hast finisht this outrageous act,  
1730 What horreur still will haunt thee for the deed:  
Think this agayne, that they which would incense  
Thee for to be the Butcher of their father,  
When it is done, for feare it should be knowne,  
Would make a meanes to rid thee from the world:  
Oh, then art thou for euer tyed in chaynes  
Of euerlasting torments to indure,  
Euen in the hottest hole of grisly hell,  
Such paynes, as neuer mortall tounge can tell.

*It thunders. He quakes, and lets fall the Dagger  
next to Perillus.*  
1740

*Leir.* O, heauens be thanked, he wil spare my friend.  
Now when thou wilt come make an end of me.

*He*

*and his three daughters.*

*He lets fall the other dagger.*

*Per.* Oh, happy sight! he meanes to saue my Lord.  
The King of heauen continue this good mind.

*Leir.* Why stayst thou to do execution?

*Mef.* I am as wilfull as you for your life:  
I will not do it, now you do intreat me.

*Per.* Ah, now I see thou hast some sparke of grace.

*Mef.* Beshrew you for it, you haue put it in me: 1750  
The parlofest old men, that ere I heard.

Well, to be flat, ile not meddle with you:

Here I found you, and here ile leaue you:

If any aske you why the case so stands?

Say that your tounge were better then your hands. *Exit.*

*Per.* Farewell. If euer we together meet, *Mess.*  
It shall go hard, but I will thee regreet.

Courage, my Lord, the worst is ouerpast;

Let vs giue thanks to God, and hye vs hence.

*Leir.* Thou art deceyued; for I am past the best, 1760

And know not whither for to go from hence:

Death had bin better welcome vnto me,

Then longer life to adde more misery.

*Per.* It were not good to returne from whence we  
Vnto your daughter *Ragan* back againe. (came,

Now let vs go to France, vnto *Cordella*,

Your youngest daughter, doubtlesse she will succour you.

*Leir.* Oh, how can I perswade my selfe of that,

Since the other two are quite deuoyd of loue;

To whom I was so kind, as that my gifts,

Might make them loue me, if 'twere nothing else? 1770

*Per.* No worldly gifts, but grace from God on hye,

Doth nourish vertue and true charity.

Remember well what words *Cordella* spake,

What time you askt her, how she lou'd your Grace.

Se sayd, her loue vnto you was as much,

As ought a child to beare vnto her father.

*Leir.* But she did find, my loue was not to her,

As should a father beare vnto a child.

*Per.* That makes not her loue to be any lesse, 1780

G

If

## *The History of King Leir*

If she do loue you as a child should do:  
You haue tryed two, try one more for my sake,  
He ne're intreat you further tryall make.  
Remember well the dream you had of late,  
And thinke what comfort it foretels to vs.

*Leir.* Come, truest friend, that euer man posselt,  
I know thou counsaillst all things for the best:  
If this third daughter play a kinder part,  
It comes of God, and not of my desert. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. xx Enter the Gallian Ambassador solus.*

1791 *Am.* There is of late newes come vnto the Court,  
That old Lord *Leir* remaynes in Cambria:  
He hye me thither presently, to impart  
My letters and my message vnto him.  
I neuer was lesse welcome to a place  
In all my life time, then I haue bin hither,  
Especially vnto the stately Queene,  
Who would not cast one gracious looke on me,  
But still with lowring and suspicious eyes,  
1800 Would take exceptions at each word I spake,  
And fayne she would haue vndermined me,  
To know what my Ambassage did import:  
But she is like to hop without her hope,  
And in this matter for to want her will,  
Though (by report) sheele hau't in all things else.  
Well, I will poste away for Cambria:  
Within these few dayes I hope to be there, *Exit.*

*Sc. xxi Enter the King and Queene of Gallia, & Mumford.*

*King.* By this, our father vnderstands our mind,  
1810 And our kind greetings sent to him of late:  
Therefore my mind presageth ere't be long,  
We shall receyue from Brittain happy newes.

*Cord.* I feare, my sister will disswade his mind;  
For she to me hath alwayes bin vnkind.

✓ *King.* Feare not, my loue, since that we know the worst,  
✓ The last meanes helps, if that we misse the first:  
If hee'le not come to Gallia vnto vs,  
Then we will sayle to Brittain vnto him.

*Mum.* Well,

*and his three daughters.*

*Mum.* Well, if I once see Brittainne agayne,  
I haue sworne, ile ne're come home without my wench, 1820  
And ile not be forsworne,  
Ile rather neuer come home while I liue.

*Cor.* Are you sure, *Mumford*, she is a mayd still?

*Mum.* Nay, ile not sweare she is a mayd, but she goes for one:  
Ile take her at all aduentures, if I can get her.

*Cor.* I, thats well put in.

*Mum.* Well put in? nay, it was ill put in; for had it  
Bin as well put in, as ere I put in, in my dayes,  
I would haue made her follow me to Fraunce.

*Cor.* Nay, you'd haue bin so kind, as take her with you, 1830  
Or else, were I as she,  
I would haue bin so louing, as ide stay behind you:  
Yet I must confesse, you are a very proper man,  
And able to make a wench do more then she would do.

*Mum.* Well, I haue a payre of slops for the nonce,  
Will hold all your mocks.

*King.* Nay, we see you haue a handsome hose.

*Cor.* I, and of the newest fashion.

*Mum.* More bobs, more: put them in still,  
They'l serue instead of bumbast, yet put not in too many, 1840  
lest the seames crack, and they fly out amongst you againe:  
you must not think to outface me so easily in my mistris quarrel,  
who if I see once agayne, ten teame of horses shall  
not draw me away, till I haue full and whole possession.

*King.* I, but one teame and a cart will serue the turne.

*Cor.* Not only for him, but also for his wench.

*Mum.* Well, you are two to one, ile giue you ouer:  
And since I see you so pleasantly disposed,  
Which indeed is but seldome scene, ile clayme  
A promise of you, which you shall not deny me: 1850  
For promise is debt, & by this hand you promised it me.  
Therefore you owe it me, and you shall pay it me,  
Or ile sue you vpon an action of vnkindnesse.

*King.* Prithy, Lord *Mumford*, what promise did I make thee?

*Mum.* Fayth, nothing but this,  
That the next fayre weather, which is very now,

## *The History of King Leir*

You would go in progresse downe to the sea side,  
Which is very neere.

*King.* Fayth, in this motion I will ioyne with thee,  
1860 And be a mediator to my Queene.

Prithy, my Loue, let this match go forward,  
My mind foretels, 'twill be a lucky voyage.

*Cor.* Entreaty needs not, where you may cōmaund,  
So you be please, I am right well content :  
Yet, as the Sea I much desire to see ;  
So am I most vnwilling to be seene.

*King.* Weele go disguised, all vnknowne to any.

*Cor.* Howsoeuer you make one, ile make another.

*Mum.* And I the third : oh, I am ouer-ioyed !  
1870 See what loue is, which getteth with a word,  
What all the world besides could ne're obtayne !  
But what disguises shall we haue, my Lord ?

*King.* Fayth thus : my Queene & I will be disguise,  
Like a playne country couple, and you shall be *Roger*  
Our man, and wayt vpon vs : or if you will,  
You shall go first, and we will wayt on you.

*Mum.* Twere more then time ; this deuice is excellent.  
Come let vs about it. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. xiii* *Enter Cambria and Ragan, with Nobles.*

1880 *Cam.* What strange mischance or vnexpected hap  
Hath thus depriu'd vs of our fathers presence ?  
Can no man tell vs what's become of him,  
With whom we did conuerse not two dayes since ?  
My Lords, let euery where light-horse be sent,  
To scoure about through all our Regiment.  
Dispatch a Poste immediately to Cornwall,  
To see if any newes be of him there ;  
My selfe will make a strickt inquiry here,  
And all about our Cities neere at hand,  
1890 Till certayne newes of his abode be brought.

*Rag.* All sorrow is but counterfet to mine,  
Whose lips are almost sealed vp with griefe :  
Mine is the substance, whilst they do but seeme  
To weepe the lesse, which teares cannot redeeme.

O,

*and his three daughters.*

O, ne're was heard so strange a misadventure,  
A thing so far beyond the reach of fence,  
Since no mans reason in the cause can enter.  
What hath remou'd my father thus from hence ?  
O, I do feare some charme or inuocation  
Of wicked spirits, or infernall fiends,  
Stird by *Cordella*, moues this innouation,  
And brings my father timelesse to his end.  
But might I know, that the detested Witch  
Were certayne cause of this vncertayne ill,  
My selfe to Fraunce would go in some disguise,  
And with these nayles scratch out her hatefull eyes :  
For since I am deprivied of my father,  
I loath my life, and with my death the rather.

1900

*Cam.* The heauens are iust, and hate impiety,  
And will (no doubt) reueale such haynous crimes :  
Censure not any, till you know the right :  
Let him be Iudge, that bringeth truth to light.

1910

*Ra.* O, but my grieffe, like to a swelling tyde,  
Exceeds the bounds of common patience :  
Nor can I moderate my tounge so much,  
To conceale them, whom I hold in suspect.

*Cam.* This matter shall be sifted : if it be she,  
A thousand Fraunces shall not harbour her.

*Enter the Gallian Ambassador.*

*Am.* All happinesse vnto the Cambrian King.

1920

*Cam.* Welcom, my friend, from whence is thy Ambassage ?

*Am.* I came from Gallia, vnto Cornwall sent,  
With letters to your honourable father,  
Whom there not finding, as I did expect,  
I was directed hither to repayre.

*Rag.* Frenchman, what is thy message to my father ?

*Am.* My letters, Madam, will import the same,  
Which my Commisssion is for to deliuer.

*Ra.* In his absence you may trust vs with your letters.

*Am.* I must performe my charge in such a maner,  
As I haue strict commaundement from the King.

1930

*Ra.* There is good packing twixt your King and you :



## *The History of King Leir*

You need not hither come to aske for him,  
You know where he is better then our selues.

*Am.* Madam, I hope, not far off.

*Ra.* Hath the young murtheresse, your outrageous Queene,  
No meanes to colour her detested deeds,  
In finishing my guiltlesse fathers dayes,  
(Because he gaue her nothing to her dowre)  
1940 But by the colour of a fayn'd Ambassage,  
To send him letters hither to our Court?  
Go carry them to them that sent them hither,  
And bid them keepe their scroules vnto themselues:  
They cannot blind vs with such slight excuse,  
To smother vp so monstrous vild abuse.  
And were it not, it is 'gainst law of Armes,  
To offer violence to a Messenger,  
We would inflict such torments on thy selfe,  
As should inforce thee to reueale the truth.

1950 *Am.* Madam, your threats no whit apall my mind,  
I know my conscience guiltlesse of this act;  
My King and Queene, I dare be sworne, are free  
From any thought of such impiety:  
And therefore, Madam, you haue done them wrong,  
And ill beseeming with a sisters loue,  
Who in meere duty tender him as much,  
As euer you respected him for dowre.  
The King your husband will not say as much.

*Cam.* I will suspend my iudgement for a time,  
1960 Till more apparance giue vs further light:  
Yet to be playne, your comming doth inforce  
A great suspicion to our do ubtful mind,  
And that you do resemble, to be briefe,  
Him that first robs, and then cries, Stop the theefe.

*Am.* Pray God some neere you haue not done the like.

*Rag.* Hence, saucy mate, reply no more to vs; *She strikes*  
For law of Armes shall not protect thy tounge. *him.*

*Am.* Ne're was I offred such discourtesy;  
God and my King, I trust, ere it be long,  
1970 Will find a meane to remedy this wrong,

*Exit Amb.*

*Rag.* How

*and his three daughters.*

*Rag.* How shall I liue, to suffer this disgrace,  
At euery base and vulgar peasants hands?  
It ill befitteth my imperiall state,  
To be thus vsde, and no man take my part. *Shee weeps.*

*Cam.* What should I do? infringe the law of Armes,  
Were to my euerlasting obloquy:  
But I will take reuenge vpon his master,  
Which sent him hither, to delude vs thus.

*Rag.* Nay, if you put vp this, be sure, ere long,  
Now that my father thus is made away,  
Sheele come & clayme a third part of your Crowne,  
As due vnto her by inheritance.

*Cam.* But I will proue her title to be nought  
But shame, and the reward of Parricide,  
And make her an example to the world,  
For after-ages to admire her penance.  
This will I do, as I am Cambriaes King,  
Or lose my life, to prosecute reuenge.  
Come, first let's learne what newes is of our father,  
And then proceed, as best occasion fits. *Exeunt.*

1980

1990

Sc. xxiii

*Enter Leir, Perillus, and two Marriners, in sea-gownes and sea-caps.*

*Per.* My honest friends, we are asham'd to shew  
The great extremity of our present state,  
In that at this time we are brought so low,  
That we want money for to pay our passage.  
The truth is so, we met with some good fellowes,  
A little before we came aboard your ship,  
Which stript vs quite of all the coyne we had,  
And left vs not a penny in our purses:  
Yet wanting mony, we will vse the meane,  
To see you satisfied to the vttermost. *Looke on Leir.*

2000

1. *Mar.* Heres a good gown, 'twould become me passing wel,  
I should be fine in it. *Looke on Perillus.*

2. *Mar.* Heres a good cloke, I maruel how I should look in it.

*Leir.* Fayth, had we others to supply their roome,  
Though ne'er so meane, you willingly should haue them.

1. *Mar.* Do you heare, fir? you looke like an honest man;

## *The History of King Leir*

Ile not stand to do you a pleasure: here's a good strög motly ga-  
2010 berdine, cost me xiiij. good shillings at Billingsgate, giue me your  
gowne for it, & your cap for mine, & ile forgiue your passage.

*Leir.* With al my heart, and xx. thanks. *Leir & be changeth.*

2. *Mar.* Do you heare, sir? you shal haue a better match thẽ he,  
because you are my friend: here is a good sheeps russet sea-  
gowne, wil bide more streffe, I warrant you, then two of his, yet  
for you seem to be an honest gentleman, I am content to chāge  
it for your cloke, and aske you nothing for your passage more.

*Pull off Perillus cloke.*

*Per.* My owne I willingly would change with thee,  
2020 And think my selfe indebted to thy kindnesse:

But would my friend might keepe his garment still.  
My friend, ile giue thee this new dublet, if thou wilt  
Restore his gowne vnto him back agayne.

1. *Mar.* Nay, if I do, would I might ne're eate powderd beefe  
and mustard more, nor drink Can of good liquor whilst I liue.  
My friend, you haue small reason to seeke to hinder me of my  
bargaine: but the best is, a bargayne's a bargayne.

*Leir.* Kind friend, it is much better as it is; *Leir to Perillus.*  
For by this meanes we may escape vnknowne,

2030 Till time and opportunity do fit.

2. *Mar.* Hark, hark, they are laying their heads together,  
Theile repent them of their bargayne anon,  
'Twere best for vs to go while we are well.

1. *Mar.* God be with you, sir, for your passage back agayne,  
Ile vse you as vnreasonable as another.

*Leir.* I know thou wilt; but we hope to bring ready money  
With vs, when we come back agayne. *Exeunt Mariners.*  
Were euer men in this extremity,

In a strange country, and deuoyd of friends,

2040 And not a penny for to helpe our selues?

Kind friend, what thinkst thou will become of vs?

*Per.* Be of good cheere, my Lord, I haue a dublet,  
Will yeeld vs mony ynough to serue our turnes,  
Vntill we come vnto your daughters Court:  
And then, I hope, we shall find friends ynough.

*Leir.* Ah, kind *Perillus*, that is it I feare,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And makes me faynt, or euer I come there.  
Can kindnesse spring out of ingratitude?  
Or loue be reapt, where hatred hath bin sowne?  
Can Henbane ioyne in league with Methridate?  
Or Sugar grow in Wormwoods bitter stalke?  
It cannot be, they are too opposite:  
And so am I to any kindnesse here.

2050

I haue throwne Wormwood on the sugred youth,  
And like to Henbane poysoned the Fount,  
Whence flowed the Methridate of a childs goodwil:  
I, like an enuious thorne, haue prickt the heart,  
And turnd sweet Grapes, to sowre vnrelisht Sloes:  
The causelesse ire of my respectlesse brest,  
Hath sowrd the sweet milk of dame Natures paps:  
My bitter words haue gauld her hony thoughts,  
And weeds of rancour chokt the flower of grace.  
Then what remainder is of any hope,  
But all our fortunes will go quite allope?

2060

*Per.* Feare not, my Lord, the perfit good indeed,  
Can neuer be corrupted by the bad:  
A new fresh vessell still retaynes the taste  
Of that which first is powr'd into the same:  
And therefore, though you name yourselfe the thorn,  
The weed, the gall, the henbane & the wormewood;  
Yet sheele continue in her former state,  
The hony, milke, Grape, Sugar, Methridate.

2070

*Leir.* Thou pleasing Orator vnto me in wo,  
Cease to beguile me with thy hopefull speeches:  
O ioyne with me, and thinke of nought but crosses,  
And then weele one lament anothers losses.

*Per.* Why, say the worst, the worst can be but death,  
And death is better then for to despaire:  
Then hazzard death, which may conuert to life;  
Banish despaire, which brings a thousand deathes.

2080

*Leir.* Orecome with thy strong arguments, I yeeld,  
To be directed by thee, as thou wilt:  
As thou yeeldst comfort to my crazed thoughts,  
Would I could yeeld the like vnto thy body,  
Which is full weake, I know, and ill apayd,

H

For

## *The History of King Leir*

For want of fresh meat and due sustenance.

*Per.* Alack, my Lord, my heart doth bleed, to think  
That you should be in such extremity.

*Leir.* Come, let vs go, and see what God will send;

2090 When all meanes faile, he is the surest friend. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. xxiu* *Enter the Gallian King and Queene, and Mumford, with a  
basket, disguised like Countrey folke.*

*King.* This tedious iourney all on foot, sweet Loue,  
Cannot be pleasing to your tender ioynts,  
Which ne're were vsed to these toylefome walks.

*Cord.* I neuer in my life tooke more delight  
In any iourney, then I do in this:

It did me good, when as we hapt to light  
Amongst the merry crue of country folke,

2100 To see what induntry and paynes they tooke,  
To win them commendations 'mongst their friends.

Lord, how they labour to bestir themselues,  
And in their quirks to go beyond the Moone,  
And so take on them with such antike fits,  
That one would think they were beside their wits!

Come away, *Roger*, with your basket.

*Mum.* Soft, Dame, here comes a couple of old youthes,  
I must needs make my selfe fat with iesting at them.

*Cor.* Nay, prithy do not, they do seeme to be *Enter Leir*  
2110 Men much o'regone with grieve and misery. *& Perillus*  
Let's stand aside, and harken what they say. *very faintly.*

*Leir.* Ah, my *Perillus*, now I see we both  
Shall end our dayes in this vnfruitfull soyle.

Oh, I do faint for want of sustenance:

And thou, I know, in little better case.

No gentle tree affords one taste of fruit,  
To comfort vs, vntill we meet with men:  
No lucky path conducts our lucklesse steps  
Vnto a place where any comfort dwels.

2120 Sweet rest betyde vnto our happy soules;  
For here I see our bodies must haue end.

*Per.* Ah, my deare Lord, how doth my heart lament,  
To see you brought to this extremity!  
O, if you loue me, as you do professe,

Or

*and his three daughters.*

Or euer thought well of me in my life, *He strips up his arme.*  
Feed on this flesh, whose veynes are not so dry,  
But there is vertue left to comfort you.  
O, feed on this, if this will do you good,  
Ile smile for ioy, to see you suck my bloud.

*Leir.* I am no Caniball, that I should delight  
To flake my hungry iawes with humane flesh:  
I am no deuill, or ten times worse then so,  
To suck the bloud of such a peerelesse friend.  
O, do not think that I respect my life  
So dearely, as I do thy loyall loue.  
Ah, Brittain, I shall neuer see thee more,  
That hast vnkindly banished thy King:  
And yet not thou dost make me to complayne,  
But they which were more neere to me then thou.

2130

*Cor.* What do I heare? this lamentable voyce,  
Me thinks, ere now I oftentimes haue heard.

2140

*Leir.* Ah, *Gonorill*, was halfe my Kingdomes gift  
The cause that thou didst seeke to haue my life?  
Ah, cruell *Ragan*, did I giue thee all,  
And all could not suffice without my bloud?  
Ah, poore *Cordella*, did I giue thee nought,  
Nor neuer shall be able for to giue?  
O, let me warne all ages that insueth,  
How they trust flattery, and reiect the trueth.  
Well, vnkind Girles, I here forgiue you both,  
Yet the iust heauens will hardly do the like;  
And only craue forgiuenesse at the end  
Of good *Cordella*, and of thee, my friend;  
Of God, whose Maiesty I haue offended,  
By my transgression many thousand wayes:  
Of her, deare heart, whom I for no occasion  
Turn'd out of all, through flatterers perswasion:  
Of thee, kind friend, who but for me, I know,  
Hadst neuer come vnto this place of wo.

2150

*Cor.* Alack, that euer I should liue to see  
My noble father in this misery.

2160

*King.* Sweet Loue, reueale not what thou art as yet,  
Vntill we know the ground of all this ill.

## *The History of King Leir*

*Cor.* O, but some meat, some meat: do you not see,  
How neere they are to death for want of food?

*Per.* Lord, which didst help thy seruants at their need,  
Or now or neuer send vs helpe with speed.

Oh comfort, comfort! yonder is a banquet,  
And men and women, my Lord: be of good cheare;

2170 For I see comfort comming very neere.

O my Lord, a banquet, and men and women!

*Leir.* O, let kind pity mollify their hearts,  
That they may helpe vs in our great extreames.

*Per.* God saue you, friends; & if this blessed banquet  
Affordeth any food or sustenance,

Euen for his sake that saued vs all from death,

Vouchsafe to saue vs from the gripe of famine. *She bringeth*

*Cor.* Here father, sit and eat, here, sit & drink: *him to the table*  
And would it were far better for your sakes.

2180 *Perillus takes Leir by the hand to the table.*

*Per.* Ile giue you thanks anon: my friend doth faynt,  
And needeth present comfort. *Leir drinks.*

*Mum.* I warrant, he ne're staves to say grace:  
O, theres no fauce to a good stomake.

*Per.* The blessed God of heauen hath thought vpon vs.

*Leir.* The thanks be his, and these kind courteous folke,  
By whose humanity we are preferued. *They eat hungerly, Leir*

*Cor.* And may that draught be vnto him, as was *drinkes.*  
That which old *Eson* dranke, which did renue

2190 His withered age, and made him young againe.

And may that meat be vnto him, as was  
That which *Elias* ate, in strength whereof  
He walked fourty dayes, and neuer faynted.  
Shall I conceale me longer from my father?  
Or shall I manifest my selfe to him?

*King.* Forbeare a while, vntill his strength returne,  
Left being ouer ioyed with seeing thee,  
His poore weake fences should forsake their office,  
And so our cause of ioy be turnd to sorrow.

2200 *Per.* What chere, my Lord? how do you feele your selfe?

*Leir.* Me thinks, I neuer ate such sauory meat:  
It is as pleasant as the blessed Manna,

That

*and his three daughters.*

That raynd from heauen amongst the Israelites:  
It hath recall'd my spirits home agayne,  
And made me fresh, as earst I was before.  
But how shall we congratulate their kindnesse?

*Per.* Infayth, I know not how sufficiently;  
But the best meane that I can think on, is this:  
Ile offer them my dublet in requitall;  
For we haue nothing else to spare.

2210

*Leir.* Nay, stay, *Perillus*, for they shall haue mine.

*Per.* Pardon, my Lord, I sweare they shall haue mine.

*Perillus proffers his dublet: they will not take it.*

*Leir.* Ah, who would think such kindnes should remayne  
Among such strange and vnacquainted men:  
And that such hate should harbour in the brest  
Of those, which haue occasion to be best?

*Cor.* Ah, good old father, tell to me thy grieffe,  
Ile sorrow with thee, if not adde reliefe.

*Leir.* Ah, good young daughter, I may call thee so;  
For thou art like a daughter I did owe.

2220

*Cor.* Do you not owe her still? what, is she dead?

*Leir.* No, God forbid: but all my interest's gone,  
By shewing my selfe too much vnnaturall:  
So haue I lost the title of a father,  
And may be call'd a stranger to her rather.

*Cor.* Your title's good still; for tis alwayes knowne,  
A man may do as him list with his owne.  
But haue you but one daughter then in all?

*Leir.* Yes, I haue more by two, then would I had.

2230

*Cor.* O, say not so, but rather see the end:  
They that are bad, may haue the grace to mend:  
But how haue they offended you so much?

*Leir.* If from the first I should relate the cause,  
'Twould make a heart of Adamant to weepe;  
And thou, poore soule, kind-hearted as thou art,  
Dost weepe already, ere I do begin.

*Cor.* For Gods loue tell it, and when you haue done,  
Ile tell the reason why I weepe so soone.

*Leir.* Then know this first, I am a Brittain borne,  
And had three daughters by one louing wife;

2240



## *The History of King Leir*

And though I say it, of beauty they were sped;  
Especially the youngest of the three,  
For her perfections hardly matcht could be:  
On these I doted with a ielous loue,  
And thought to try which of them lou'd me best,  
By asking them, which would do most for me?  
The first and second flattred me with words,  
And vovd they lou'd me better then their liues:  
2250 The youngest sayd, she loued me as a child  
Might do: her answere I esteem'd most vild,  
And presently in an outrageous mood,  
I turned her from me to go sinke or swim:  
And all I had, euen to the very clothes,  
I gaue in dowry with the other two:  
And she that best deseru'd the greatest share,  
I gaue her nothing, but disgrace and care.  
Now mark the sequell: When I had done thus,  
I sojournd in my eldest daughters house,  
2260 Where for a time I was intreated well,  
And liu'd in state sufficing my content:  
But euery day her kindnesse did grow cold,  
Which I with patience put vp well ynough,  
And seemed not to see the things I saw:  
But at the last she grew so far incens'd  
With moody fury, and with causelesse hate,  
That in most vild and contumelious termes,  
She bade me pack, and harbour somewhere else.  
Then was I fayne for refuge to repayre  
2270 Vnto my other daughter for reliefe,  
Who gaue me pleasing and most courteous words;  
But in her actions shewed her selfe so fore,  
As neuer any daughter did before:  
She prayd me in a morning out betime,  
To go to a thicket two miles from the Court,  
Poynting that there she would come talke with me:  
There she had set a shaghayrd murdring wretch,  
To massacre my honest friend and me.  
Then iudge your selfe, although my tale be brieve,  
2280 If euer man had greater cause of grieve.

*King. Nor*

*and his three daughters.*

*King.* Nor neuer like impiety was done,  
Since the creation of the world begun.

*Leir.* And now I am constraind to seeke reliefe  
Of her, to whom I haue bin so vnkind;  
Whose censure, if it do award me death,  
I must confesse she payes me but my due:  
But if she shew a louing daughters part,  
It comes of God and her, not my desert.

*Cor.* No doubt she will, I dare be sworne she will.

*Leir.* How know you that, not knowing what she is? 2290

*Cor.* My selfe a father haue a great way hence,  
Vfide me as ill as euer you did her;  
Yet, that his reuerend age I once might see,  
Ide creepe along, to meet him on my knee.

*Leir.* O, no mens children are vnkind but mine.

*Cor.* Condemne not all, because of others crime:  
But looke, deare father, looke, behold and see  
Thy louing daughter speaketh vnto thee. *She kneeles.*

*Leir.* O, stand thou vp, it is my part to kneele,  
And aske forgiuenesse for my former faults. *he kneeles.* 2300

*Cor.* O, if you wish I should inioy my breath,  
Deare father rise, or I receiue my death. *he riseth.*

*Leir.* Then I will rise, to satisfy your mind,  
But kneele againe, til pardon be resignd. *he kneeles.*

*Cor.* I pardon you: the word befeemes not me:  
But I do say so, for to ease your knee.  
You gaue me life, you were the cause that I  
Am what I am, who else had neuer bin.

*Leir.* But you gaue life to me and to my friend,  
Whose dayes had else, had an vntimely end. 2310

*Cor.* You brought me vp, when as I was but young,  
And far vnable for to helpe my selfe.

*Leir.* I cast thee forth, when as thou wast but young,  
And far vnable for to helpe thy selfe.

*Cor.* God, world and nature say I do you wrong,  
That can indurè to see you kneele so long.

*King.* Let me breake off this louing controuersy,  
Which doth reioyce my very soule to see.  
Good father, rise, she is your louing daughter, *He riseth.*

## *The History of King Leir*

2320 And honours you with as respectiue duty,  
As if you were the Monarch of the world.

*Cor.* But I will neuer rise from off my knee, *She kneeles.*  
Vntill I haue your blessing, and your pardon  
Of all my faults committed any way,  
From my first birth vnto this present day.

*Leir.* The blessing, which the God of *Abraham* gaue  
Vnto the trybe of *Juda*, light on thee,  
And multiply thy dayes, that thou mayst see  
Thy childrens children prosper after thee.

2330 Thy faults, which are iust none that I do know,  
God pardon on high, and I forgiue below. *She riseth.*

*Cor.* Now is my heart at quiet, and doth leape  
Within my brest, for ioy of this good hap:  
And now (deare father) welcome to our Court,  
And welcome (kind *Perillus*) vnto me,  
Myrrour of vertue and true honesty.

*Leir.* O, he hath bin the kindest friend to me,  
That euer man had in aduersity.

*Per.* My tounge doth faile, to say what heart doth think,  
2340 I am so rauisht with exceeding ioy.

*King.* All you haue spoke: now let me speak my mind,  
And in few words much matter here conclude: *he kneeles.*  
If ere my heart do harbour any ioy,  
Or true content repose within my brest,  
Till I haue rooted out this viperous sect,  
And repofsest my father of his Crowne,  
Let me be counted for the periurdfst man,  
That euer spake word since the world began. *rise.*

*Mum.* Let me pray to, that neuer pray'd before; *Mumford kneeles.*  
2350 If ere I resalute the Brittiſh earth,

(As (ere't be long) I do presume I shall)  
And do returne from thence without my wench,  
Let me be gelded for my recompence. *rise.*

*King.* Come, let's to armes for to redresse this wrong:  
Till I am there, me thinks, the time seemes long. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. xrv*

*Enter Ragan ſola.*

*Rag.* I feele a hell of conscience in my brest,  
Tormenting me with horreur for my fact,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And makes me in an agony of doubt,  
For feare the world should find my dealing out.  
The slaue whom I appoynted for the act,  
I ne're set eye vpon the peasant since:  
O, could I get him for to make him sure,  
My doubts would cease, and I should rest secure.  
But if the old men, with perswasive words,  
Haue sau'd their liues, and made him to relent;  
Then are they fled vnto the Court of Fraunce,  
And like a Trumpet manifest my shame.

2360

A shame on these white-liu'd slaues, say I,  
That with fayre words so soone are ouercome.  
O God, that I had bin but made a man;  
Or that my strength were equall with my will!  
These foolish men are nothing but meere pity,  
And melt as butter doth against the Sun.

2370

Why should they haue preeminence ouer vs,  
Since we are creatures of more braue resolute?

I sweare, I am quite out of charity  
With all the heartlesse men in Christendome.

A poxe vpon them, when they are affrayd  
To giue a stab, or slit a paltry Wind-pipe,  
Which are so easy matters to be done.

2380

Well, had I thought the slaue would serue me so,  
My selfe would haue bin executioner:

'Tis now vndone, and if that it be knowne,  
Ile make as good shift as I can for one.

He that repines at me, how ere it stands,

'Twere best for him to keepe him from my hands. *Exit.*

*Sound Drums & Trumpets: Enter the Gallian King,*

*Sc. xxvi*

*Leir, Mumford and the army.*

*King.* Thus haue we brought our army to the sea,

2390

Whereas our ships are ready to receyue vs:

The wind stands fayre, and we in foure houres sayle,

May easily arriue on Brittainish shore,

Where v unexpected we may them surprize,

And gayne a glorious victory with ease.

Wherefore, my louing Countrey men, resolute,

Since truth and iustice fighteth on our sides,

I

That

## *The History of King Leir*

That we shall march with conquest where we go.  
My selfe will be as forward as the first,  
2400 And step by step march with the hardiest wight:  
And not the meanest souldier in our Campe  
Shall be in danger, but ile second him.  
To you, my Lord, we giue the whole commaund  
Of all the army, next vnto our selfe,  
Not doubting of you, but you will extend  
Your wonted valour in this needfull case,  
Encouraging the rest to do the like,  
By your approued magnanimity..

*Mum.* My Liege, tis needlesse to spur a willing horse,  
2410 Thats apt enough to run himselfe to death:  
For here I sweare by that sweet Saints bright eye,  
Which are the starres, which guide me to good hap,  
Eyther to see my old Lord crown'd anew,  
Or in his cause to bid the world adieu.

*Leir.* Thanks, good Lord *Mumford*, tis more of your good will,  
Then any merit or desert in me.

*Mum.* And now to you, my worthy Countrymen,  
Ye valiant race of Genouestan Gawles,  
Surnamed Red-shanks, for your chyualry,  
2420 Because you fight vp to the shanks in bloud;  
Shew your selues now to be right Gawles indeed,  
And be so bitter on your enemies,  
That they may say, you are as bitter as Gall.  
Gall them, braue Shot, with your Artillery:  
Gall them, braue Halberts, with your sharp point Billes,  
Each in their poynted place, not one, but all,  
Fight for the credit of your selues and Gawle.

*King.* Then what should more perswasion need to those,  
That rather wish to deale, then heare of blowes?  
2430 Let's to our ships, and if that God permit,  
In foure houres sayle, I hope we shall be there.

*Mum.* And in fise houres more, I make no doubt,  
But we shall bring our wish'd desires about. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. xviij* *Enter a Captayne of the watch, and two watchmen.*

*Cap.* My honest friends, it is your turne to night,  
To watch in this place, neere about the Beacon,  
And

*and his three daughters.*

And vigilantly haue regard,  
If any fleet of ships passe hitherward:  
Which if you do, your office is to fire

The Beacon presently, and raise the towne. *Exit.* 2440

1. *Wat.* I, I, I, feare nothing; we know our charge, I warrant:  
I haue bin a watchman about this Beacon this xxx. yere, and  
yet I ne're see it stir, but stood as quietly as might be.

2. *Wat.* Fayth neighbour, and you'l follow my vice, instead of  
watching the Beacon, wee'l go to goodman *Gennings*, & watch  
a pot of Ale and a rasher of Bacon: and if we do not drink our  
selues drunke, then so; I warrant, the Beacon will see vs when  
we come out agayne.

1. *W.* I, but how if some body excuse vs to the Captayne?

2. *W.* Tis no matter, ile proue by good reason that we watch 2450  
the Beacon: asse for example.

1. *W.* I hope you do not call me asse by craft, neighbour.

2. *W.* No, no, but for example: Say here stands the pot of ale,  
thats the Beacon. 1. *W.* I, I, tis a very good Beacon.

2. *W.* Well, say here stands your nose, thats the fire.

1. *W.* Indeed I must confesse, tis somewhat red.

2. *W.* I see come marching in adish, halfe a score pieces of salt  
Bacon. 1. *W.* I vnderstand your meaning, thats as much to say,  
half a score ships. 2. *W.* True, you conster right; presently, like  
a faithfull watchman, I fire the Beacon, and call vp the towne. 2460

1. *W.* I, thats as much as to say, you set your nose to the pot, and  
drink vp the drink. 2. *W.* You are in the right; come, let's go  
fire the Beacon. *Exeunt.*

*Enter the King of Gallia with a stil march, Mumford & soldiers. Sc. xxviii*

*King.* Now march our ensignes on the Brittish earth,  
And we are neere approaching to the towne:  
Then looke about you, valiant Countrymen,  
And we shall finish this exployt with ease.

Th'inhabitants of this mistrustfull place,  
Are dead asleep, as men that are secure: 2470

Here shall we skirmish but with naked men,  
Deuoyd of sence, new waked from a dreame,  
That know not what our comming doth pretend,  
Till they do feele our meaning on their skinnes:  
Therefore assaile: God and our right for vs. *Exeunt.*

## The History of King Leir

Sc. xxix *Alarum, with men and women halfe naked: Enter two Captaynes without dublets, with swords.*

1. *Cap.* Where are these villaines that were set to watch,  
And fire the Beacon, if occasion seru'd,  
2480 That thus haue suffred vs to be surprisde,  
And neuer giuen notice to the towne?  
We are betrayd, and quite deuoyd of hope,  
By any meanes to fortify our selues.

2. *Cap.* Tis ten to one the peasants are o'recome with drinke  
and sleep, and so neglect their charge.

1. *Cap.* A whirl-wind carry them quick to a whirl-poole,  
That there the slaues may drinke their bellies full.

2. *Cap.* This tis, to haue the Beacon so neere the Ale-house.

*Enter the watchmen drunke, with each a pot.*

2490 1. *Cap.* Out on ye, villaynes, whither run you now?

1. *Wat.* To fire the towne, and call vp the Beacon.

2. *Wat.* No, no, sir, to fire the Beacon. *He drinks.*

2. *Cap.* What, with a pot of ale, you drunken Rogues?

1. *Cap.* You'll fire the Beacon, when the towne is lost:  
Ile teach you how to tend your office better. *draw to stab them.*

*Enter Mumford, Captaynes run away.*

*Mum.* Yeeld, yeeld, yeeld. *He kicks downe their pots.*

1. *Wat.* Reelee? no, we do not reele:

You may lacke a pot of Ale ere you dye.

2500 *Mum.* But in meane space, I answer, you want none.

Wel, theres no dealing with you, y'are tall men, & wel weapōd,  
I would there were no worfe then you in the towne. *Exit.*

2. *Wat.* A speakslike an honest man, my cholers past already.  
Come, neighbour, let's go.

1. *Wat.* Nay, first let's see and we can stand. *Excunt.*

*Alarum, excursions, Mumford after them, and some halfe naked.*

Sc. xxx *Enter the Gallian King, Leir, Mumford, Cordella, Perillus, and soldiers, with the chiefe of the towne bound.*

*King.* Feare not, my friends, you shall receyue no hurt,  
2510 If you'll subscribe vnto your lawfull King,  
And quite reuoke your fealty from *Cambria*,  
And from aspiring *Cornwall* too, whose wiues  
Haue practisde treason 'gainst their fathers life.  
Wee come in iustice of your wronged King,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And do intend no harm at all to you,  
So you submit vnto your lawfull King.

*Leir.* Kind Countrymen, it grieues me, that perforce,  
I am constraind to vse extremities.

*Noble.* Long haue you here bin lookt for, good my Lord,  
And wish'd for by a generall consent:

2520

And had we known your Highnesse had arriued,  
We had not made resistance to your Grace:

And now, my gracious Lord, you need not doubt,  
But all the Country will yeeld presently,  
Which since your absence haue bin greatly tax'd,  
For to maintayne their ouerswelling pride.

Weele presently fend word to all our friends;  
When they haue notice, they will come apace.

*Leir.* Thanks, louing subiects; and thanks, worthy son,  
Thanks, my kind daughter, thanks to you, my Lord,  
Who willingly aduentured haue your blood,  
(Without desert) to do me so much good.

2530

*Mum.* O, say not so:

I haue bin much beholding to your Grace:  
I must confesse, I haue bin in some skirmishes,  
But I was neuer in the like to this:  
For where I was wont to meet with armed men,  
I was now incountred with naked women.

*Cord.* We that are feeble, and want vse of Armes,  
Will pray to God, to sheeld you from all harmes.

2540

*Leir.* The while your hands do manage ceaselesse toyle,  
Our hearts shall pray, the foes may haue the foyle.

*Per.* Weele fast and pray, whilst you for vs do fight,  
That victory may prosecute the right.

*King.* Me thinks, your words do amplify (my friends)  
And adde fresh vigor to my willing limmes: *Drum.*

But harke, I heare the aduerse Drum approach.  
God and our right, Saint *Denis*, and Saint *George*.

*Enter Cornwall, Cambria, Gonorill, Ragan, and the army.*

*Corn.* Presumptuous King of Gawles, how darest thou  
Presume to enter on our Brittain shore?

2550

And more then that, to take our townes perforce,  
And draw our subiects hearts from their true King?



## *The History of King Leir*

Be fute to buy it at as deare a price,  
As ere you bought presumption in your liues.

*King.* Ore-daring *Cornewall*, know, we came in right,  
And iust reuengement of the wronged King,  
Whose daughters there, fell vipers as they are,  
Haue fought to murder and depriue of life:  
2560 But God protected him from all their spight,  
And we are come in iustice of his right.

*Cam.* Nor he nor thou haue any interest here,  
But what you win and purchase with the sword.  
Thy slaunders to our noble vertuous Queenes,  
Wee'l in the battell thrust them down thy throte,  
Except for feare of our reuenging hands,  
Thou flye to sea, as not secure on lands.

*Mum.* Wellhman, ile so ferrit you ere night for that word,  
That you shall haue no mind to crake so wel this tweluemonth.

2570 *Gon.* They lye, that say, we fought our fathers death.

*Rag.* Tis meereley forged for a colours sake,  
To set a glosse on your inuasion.

Me thinks, an old man ready for to dye,  
Should be asham'd to broache so foule a lye.

*Cord.* Fy, shamelesse sifter, so deuoyd of grace,  
To call our father lyer to his face.

*Gon.* Peace (Puritan) dissembling hypocrite,  
Which art so good, that thou wilt proue stark naught:  
Anon, when as I haue you in my fingers,  
2580 Ile make you wish your selfe in Purgatory.

*Per.* Nay, peace thou monster, shame vnto thy sexe:  
Thou fiend in likeneffe of a humane creature.

*Rag.* I neuer heard a fouler spoken man.

*Leir.* Out on thee, viper, scum, filthy parricide,  
More odious to my sight then is a Toade.  
Knowest thou these letters? *She snatches them & teares them.*

*Rag.* Think you to outface me with your paltry scrowles?  
You come to driue my husband from his right,  
Vnder the colour of a forged letter.

2590 *Leir.* Who euer heard the like impiety?

*Per.* You are our debtour of more patience:  
We were more patient when we stayd for you,  
Within

*and his three daughters.*

Within the thicket two long houres and more.

*Rag.* What houres? what thicket?

*Per.* There, where you sent your seruant with your letters,  
Scald with your hand, to send vs both to heauen,  
Where, as I thinke, you neuer meane to come.

*Rag.* Alas, you are growne a child agayne with age,  
Or else your fences dote for want of sleepe.

*Per.* Indeed you made vs rise betimes, you know, 1600  
Yet had a care we should sleepe where you bade vs stay,  
But neuer wake more till the latter day.

*Gon.* Peace, peace, old fellow, thou art sleepy still.

*Mum.* Fayth, and if you reason till to morrow,  
You get no other answere at their hands.

Tis pittie two such good faces  
Should haue so little grace betweene them.

Well, let vs see if their husbands with their hands,  
Can do as much, as they do with their tounge.

*Cam.* I, with their swords they'l make your tounge vn fay 1610  
What they haue sayd, or else they'l cut them out.

*King.* Too't, gallants, too't, let's not stand brawling thus.

*Exeunt both armyes.*

*Sound alarum: excursions. Mumford must chase Cambria Sc. xxxi*  
*away: then cease. Enter Cornwall.*

*Corn.* The day is lost, our friends do all reuolt,  
And ioyne against vs with the aduerse part:  
There is no meanes of safety but by flight,  
And therefore ile to Cornwall with my Queene. *Exit.*

*Enter Cambria.*

1620

*Cam.* I thinke, there is a deuill in the Campe hath haunted  
me to day: he hath so tyred me, that in a maner I can fight no  
more.

*Enter Mumford.*

Zounds, here he comes, Ile take me to my horse. *Exit.*

*Mumford followes him to the dore, and returnes.*

*Mum.* Farewell (Welshman) giue thee but thy due,  
Thou hast a light and nimble payre of legs:  
Thou art more in debt to them then to thy hands:  
But if I meet thee once agayne to day,  
Ile cut them off, and set them to a better heart.

*Exit.* 1630

*Alarums*

## *The History of King Leir*

*Sc. xxxii Alarums and excursions, then sound victory. Enter Leir, Perillus, King, Cordella, and Mumford.*

*King.* Thanks be to God, your foes are ouercome,  
And you againe possessed of your right.

*Leir.* First to the heauens, next, thanks to you, my sonne,  
By whose good meanes I repossesse the same:  
Which if it please you to accept your selfe,  
With all my heart I will resigne to you:  
For it is yours by right, and none of mine.

2640 *First,* haue you raisd, at your owne charge, a power  
Of valiant Souldiers; (this comes all from you)  
Next haue you ventured your owne persons scathe.  
And lastly, (worthy *Gallia* neuer staynd)  
My kingly title I by thee haue gaynd.

*King.* Thank heauens, not me, my zeale to you is such,  
Commaund my vtmost, I will neuer grutch.

*Cor.* He that with all kind loue intreats his Queene,  
Will not be to her father vnkind seene.

*Leir.* Ah, my *Cordella*, now I call to mind,  
2650 The modest answere, which I tooke vnkind:  
But now I see, I am no whit beguild,  
Thou louedst me dearely, and as ought a child.  
And thou (*Perillus*) partner once in woe,  
Thee to requite, the best I can, Ile doe:  
Yet all I can, I, were it ne're so much,  
Were not sufficient, thy true loue is such.  
Thanks (worthy *Mumford*) to thee last of all,  
Not greeted last, 'cause thy desert was small;  
No, thou hast Lion-like layd on to day,  
2660 Chasing the Cornwall King and Cambria;  
Who with my daughters, daughters did I say?  
To saue their liues, the fugitiues did play.  
Come, sonne and daughter, who did me aduaunce,  
Repose with me awhile, and then for Fraunce.

*Sound Drummes and Trumpets. Exeunt.*

FINIS.









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